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THE TRADITIONAL KINSHIP SYSTEM OF THE NAYARS OF MALABAR

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[1] THE KINSHIP SYSTEM OF THE NAYARS OF MALABAR

I The Malabar Coast

(1) Physical Features

131 The Malabar Coast lies in the extreme south-west of India, along the shores of the Arabian
Sea. The coastline is 360 miles long, the area
14, 908 square miles. It is divided off from the
rest of South India by the Western Ghats, a
mountain wall broken only in the centre of the
[167] area by the Palghat Gap. Though periodic immigrations have taken place from the eastern
plateau of peninsular India into the coastal region, the mountains prevented close contacts
between the people who became established there
177] and their neighbors to the east. On the other
hand, its position laid the area open to contacts
by sea with many peoples, including Jews and
Arabs (1,000 B.C.), Egyptians and Phoenicians
(5th century B.C.), Romans (1st century A.D.),
Chinese (6th century A.D.), and after 1498 the
Portuguese followed by the English, Dutch and
French.

133 The coast falls roughly into three natural
divisions: the coastal strip, the midlands, and
the highlands rising into the Ghats.

241] The coastal strip is flat and sandy. Its chief
product is coconuts, with some rice and bananas.
[2] In the southern half of the area it is broken
by salt-water lagoons which for over 100 miles
form a continuous navigable chain, parallel to
133 the sea. Almost all the chief towns (from north
361 to south, Cannanore, Tellicherry, Mahé,

133 Calicut, Cochin, Alleppey, Quilon and Trivan-
361 drum), are situated on the coast, divided by
chains of little fishing villages. In the northern
133 half a railway runs along its edge from Manga-
361 lore in South Canara, southeast to Shoranur,
496 where it divides and turns off northeast to Madras and south to Ernakulam, the capital of Cochin State. In the extreme south another railway comes in from Tinnevelly District in the east, and follows the coast from Quilon to Trivandrum. (See Map 1.)

133 The midlands comprise low hills and fertile
241 valleys. Broad strips of alluvial rice-lands lie
in the valleys, thinning out as the land rises into
the foothills of the Ghats. On the hill slopes are
gardens of coconut palms, tapioca, plantains,
pepper, ginger, rubber, cashew-nut trees, and
many fruit trees such as jack and mango. Cash-
ews (introduced by the Portuguese) and pepper
have become for the past 100 years particularly
important cash crops on the hill-slopes of North
Malabar District, while bamboo is more preva-
lent in South Malabar District and Cochin. The
coconut is ubiquitous and very important in the
total economy. There are a few small bazaar
[361] towns, [3] but most of the people live in villages, on garden land surrounding or surrounded by wet paddy-flats.

133 The highlands rising into the Ghats are covered
[136] mainly by thick virgin forests harbouring wild
elephant and small tigers. The foothills are
[162] sparsely populated by people of the same cultural groups as are found in the plains, while higher in the mountains live primitive tribes.

241 Large plantations of tea, coffee, rubber and
313 cinnamon have been developed, chiefly by British,
in the highlands in the past hundred years,
and in the forests teak provides a basic industry.

132 The rainfall is very heavy, especially in the
north where the mountains encroach nearer to
the sea. Through most of the area it varies between
75" and 170"; in the extreme south it drops
to 32". Most of the rain comes with the southwest
monsoon between May and September;
lighter rains occur with the northeast monsoon
in late November and December. Humidity is
[243] always very high. In most areas two wet paddy
crops are taken in a year, in February and September.
The temperature varies from 70° to
90°, and is hottest in April just before the monsoon
breaks.

[4] (2) Political Divisions

631 From the establishment of British supremacy
in 1792, until July 1949, the Malabar Coast was
divided into three political areas. In the north
is the Malabar District of Madras State, in area
5, 790 square miles. It is governed in internal
affairs by the legislative assembly of Madras,
and is under a Collector (of land revenue) who
lives in Calicut, the capital of the district. The
port of Cochin is also administered as part of
Malabar District. In the centre was Cochin
State, in area 1, 493 square miles. It was governed
internally by the Maharaja of Cochin,
assisted by the Cochin legislative assembly,
whose headquarters was in Ernakulam, the capital.
In the south was Travancore State with an
area of 7, 625 square miles, under the Maharaja

631 of Travancore and the Travancore legislative
assembly, with headquarters in the capital,
Trivandrum. On July 1st, 1949, by order of the
Central Legislative Assembly in Delhi, the two
southern states were integrated as the United
States of Travancore and Cochin. The Maharaja
of Cochin retired from office, and the Maharaja
of Travancore became for the duration of
his life the first Rajpramukh of the new united
state. The State now has its headquarters and
government offices [5] at Trivandrum.

101 Despite these partly accidental political divisions,
197 the Malabar Coast is a discrete cultural
area. Malayalam, (a Dravidian language strongly
influenced in vocabulary by Sanskrit) which
became distinguished as a deviant dialect of
Tamil about the twelfth century, is the mother-tongue
of all but a few immigrant Tamil groups
in south Travancore. The area has also had
some degree of political unity in the distant
174 past as the ancient kingdom of Kerala. The
early history of Kerala is unknown. It was
ruled by the Perumals, a succession of kings
who seem to have come from outside Kerala and
who may have been feudatories in the wider empire
175 of Chera. Their government came to an
end sometime between the fourth and eleventh
centuries A.D. After this Kerala was split into
many petty kingdoms under indigenous Rajas
of Nayar stock, having matrilineal descent.
These continually fought each other and, from
1498, with the coming of the Portuguese and
later the Dutch, English and French, made
various alliances with these powers to gain their

175 individual ends. Their struggles were eclipsed by the Muslim invasions from Mysore which began in 1766, and ended when the East Indian Company took over the area in 1792. But the idea of a United Kerala has not died, and has been repeatedly suggested since India attained [6] Independence in 1947.

161 (3) Population

The Malabar Coast is the most densely populated part of India. The figures for 1931 show a population of 3, 533, 944 for Malabar; 1, 205, 016 for Cochin; and 5, 095, 073 for Travancore. In Malabar the mean density was 610 per square mile; in Cochin, 814; and in Travancore, 668. This includes forest and lagoon areas. The mean density of habitable land in Cochin was 1, 400.

[511] Relative to the present exploitation of resources the whole coast is overpopulated. Most of the people lead a hand-to-mouth existence on an income barely sufficient to support life. Want and indebtedness are chronic and there is much unemployment.

Reliable figures are not available for before 1891, but at least since that date and probably for 50 to 100 years previsouly, a great increase has taken place. The figures for 1891 were, for Malabar, 2, 557, 736; fo Cochin, 722, 906; and for Travancore, 2, 557, 736. This increase in population is part of the baseline from which we must start in analysing kinship systems.

174
631 II The Traditional Political Background

European and Arabic reports on the Nayars

174 take us back to before 1498, when Basco da Gama
631 first reached Calicut. From the mid-fifteenth century until the present, there is a fairly continuous series of records, by Arab, Portuguese, Dutch and later East India Company traders, and finally by British government officials and by Malayalis themselves. We may conveniently refer to the period before 1792, when the East India Company assumed government, as the period of the traditional political and economic organization, in contrast to the period between 1792 and 1947, which is the period of British rule. [127] My picture of the traditional social structure is a composite reconstruction from literature and from the reports of my informants. It is not possible in the limits of this paper to give the derivation of each statement, but a bibliography appears at the end.

It seems clear from the literature that from the breakdown of the ancient kingdom of Kerala (c. 7th century?) until about the 14th century, the coast was divided into many small independent chiefdoms (nads.) Each nad was headed by a petty military chief of the Nayar caste. Sometime in the 9th century, the area was revisited by Arab traders after a long absence, who began to trade with the coastal chiefdoms in pepper and coconuts. Sometime between the 11th and 13th centuries, gunpowder was introduced by the Arabs, and it appears to have been from this date that some of the chiefs began to conquer neighbouring chiefdoms and to organize small kingdoms. By the early 15th century, the chief of these kingdoms were, from north to south, 174 131 those of Kolattunad, Kottayam, Kurumbranad, Kadattunad, Calicut, and Walluvanad (in what is now Malabar District), Cochin (the modern Cochin State) and to the south, the various feudatory chiefdoms of the kingdom of Travancore. By 1496 when the Portuguese arrived, however, the Zamorin (king) of Calicut, who had gained power by extensive Arab trade, had temporarily conquered the Walluvanad and Cochin kingdoms and reduced their rulers to the status of vassal lords. The Portuguese, allied with the Cochin Raja, drove back the Zamorin northward our of Cochin during the 16th century. From then on, wars between the major kingdoms were incessant for the next three centuries. The English reached Malabar in 1615, the Dutch in 1639, and the French in 1725. Each European trading power allied itself with one or other kingdom and took part in successive battles until, in 1763, the northern half of the coast was temporarily overrun by Muslim armies from Mysore to the northeast. The Mysorean invasions ended in 1792 with the settlement of the whole area by the British East India Company, and the establishment of the modern British political organization.

101 [9] Today, the coast is still divisible into three major areas, distinguished by differences in the names and numbers of the castes who occupy them, by slight differences of dialect, dress and dietetic habits, and more marked differences in ritual beliefs and practices, and most markedly, by differences in the kinship systems of the several Hindu castes. The nothern area is that of the modern North Malabar District, north

101 of the Kora River, comprising the former kingdoms
of Kolattiri, Kottayam, Kadattunad and
part of Kurumbranad. The central area comprises
the modern South Malabar District and Cochin
State (the former kingdoms of Calicut,
Walluvanad and Cochin), and the southern area,
174 the kingdom of Travancore. In the course of
631 fieldwork it became clear that these overall
differences of custom and social structure were
connected with major political boundaries in the
period of native rule. Though divisible into
separate small kingdoms and chiefdoms, the
whole of North Malabar District was temporarily
overrun by the Kolattiri Rajas in the 16th and
17th centuries. The central area at one period
or another was all conquered by the Zamorins
and incorporated in the Calicut empire, while
the whole southern area eventually became subject
to the Travancore Rajas. In each of these
three major areas, a somewhat different political
system operated, [10] and in accordance with
this the higher castes, especially the Nayars,
were differently divided into subcastes with separate
administrative functions: each of these
subcastes in turn had a kinship system influenced
by its occupation, relationship to the land, and
601 separate historical tradition. Much confusion
114 has arisen in past discussion of Nayar kinship
because of failure to differentiate between the
three areas: it was assumed that the Nayars had
one kinship system, whereas they in fact had
three, with different terminological structures.
121 In this paper I describe the traditional and modern
101 political structures and the Nayar kinship

121 system of the central area of South Malabar and
101 Cochin, with brief references to social structure
and Nayar kinship in North Malabar. No account
is given of Travancore, since no fieldwork was
done in that area.

631 III The Traditional Political System in the Central
564 Kingdoms

(1) Caste and Territorial Divisions

Throughout Kerala, the highest Hindu caste
was the Nambudiri Brahmans, ritual and scholastic
leaders of the people, who today form one
hundredth of the total population. Carriers of
the Sanskrit language and of ancient Vedic culture,
they are thought to have entered Malabar
by peaceful infiltration from the eastern plateau
[11] early in the Christian era and to have established
themselves, by reason of their literacy
and supposedly superior ritual knowledge, as
religious leaders over the already established
565 population. In the traditional period, they were
631 throughout Kerala important landowners and
priests, in charge of most of the temples and
public rituals. They ranked ritually above the
kings and were above and outside the political
systems of the several kingdoms. Alone of all
the castes, they moved freely unmolested between
enemy kingdoms, married across the boundaries,
held periodic ceremonies and feasts
attended by their caste-members from all parts
of Kerala, and carried on their separate system
565 of intra-caste administration independently of the
631 administration of justice within the kingdoms.
623 For the latter purpose they divided out Kerala

565 631 623 into 64 gramams (caste areas), within each of
which a Nambudiri assembly composed of the
oldest members of the patrilineal extended families
of the area met periodically to arrange public
ceremonies and tried cases of offence against
caste laws. Within each gramam, the Nambudiris
[564] were divided into ranked subcastes according
to their wealth and ritual functions; these,
565 631 693 however, need not concern us here. Over the
whole area, a dignitary known as the Aravancheri
Tamburakkal, [12] who resided in Travancore,
was universally acknowledged as the ritual
and administrative leader of the Nambudiris.
This high priest was accorded the right to crown
the kings of both Calicut and Cochin, though
these rulers were traditionally at enmity. His
jurisdiction in matters of the religious law governing
social relations between castes, was
acknowledged throughout the area. The field of
social relations of the Nambudiris was thus the
whole of Kerala.

565 596 The ritual prestige of Nambudiris was supported
by their wealth: each patrilineal extended
family owned the land in at least one village, and
in addition local groups of family heads managed
lands owned by important Brahman temples in
each kingdom. The Nambudiris had a patrilineal
[611] descent system of a peculiar type described below.

565 613 631 Below the Nambudiris in ritual rank came the
royal matrilineal lineages of Calicut, Walluvanad
and Cochin. Though undoubtedly Nayar in
origin and general culture, each of these lineages
considered itself superior in ritual rank to its

565 Nayar subjects within the kingdom. Between
613 kingdoms, royal lineages disputed for rank and
631 would not intermarry: though exogamous, therefore, each lineage considered itself to form a separate and unique [13] subcaste. The Cochin lineage, being more ancient than the rest, claimed the ritual rank of Kshattriyas (the second of the four varnas or major caste-groups of ancient North India Vedic Society, in ancient times kings and warriors.) The Walluvanad and Calicut lineages, of more recent Nayar origin, were not strictly recognized as Kshattriyas, but were accorded the title of Samantans, a Sanskrit word meaning "leaders." [643] In each royal lineage, the oldest man of the whole lineage, irrespective of branch, was the crowned king and administered traditional secular rule with assistance from advisers of wealthy Nambudiri families of the kingdom, some of whom were employed as ambassadors.

Each kingdom was divided into nads or chiefdoms. In the Zamorin's kingdom, at the height of its power, some of these nads were former independent kingdoms which had been conquered by Calicut but were still ruled by their traditional monarchs who paid tribute to Calicut. These nads included Parappanad, Beypore and Chavakkad, each of whose rulers, though feudatory, claimed and were accorded higher ritual rank than the Zamorin's lineage by reason of their more ancient tradition of government. Other nads of the Calicut kingdom were ruled by hereditary Nayar chiefs (naduvaris) originally appointed by the Zamorin. [14] These ruled with

565 similar powers to those of the feudatory mon-
613 archs, but, though they were accorded the title
631 of Samantans, were considered of lower ritual
rank than the Zamorin's lineage. Similarly, some nads of the Cochin kingdom were governed by conquered feudatory kings of higher ritual rank than, but administratively subordinate to, the royal lineage, and others by lower ranking Samantan chiefs appointed by the king. Within each kingdom, the Samantan chiefs' lineages formed a single subcaste.

565 Each nad was in turn divided into villages or
621 desams, the basic units of the political system.
423 A desam appears usually to have covered from
one to four square miles, comprising one or more stretches of dry garden land surrounded by, or surrounding, flats of alluvial paddy land. The land in each desam was owned by one landlord family of superior ritual rank to the other occupants of the villages. In some villages, the land was owned by a single Nambudiri partilineal extended family whose large house stood in a central position in the village. In others, it was owned by one or other branch of the royal matrilineage which had built a small palace in the village and whose eldest male member acted as a village headman. In other villages, the land was owned by the chiefly matrilineal lineage of the nad, whether this [15] were of feudatory rank of vassal Samantan rank. Again in this case the chiefly family would live in a small palace in the centre of the village and fulfill the role of headman. In other villages, the land was owned by some famous Hindu temple of the kingdom, often

565 at a distance of several miles, and managed by
621 Nambudiri Brahmans. In this case a represen-
423 tative Nambudiri patrilineal family might live in the village and play the role of headman. In yet other villages, which probably comprised about half the villages in the kingdom, the land was owned by the matrilineage of a hereditary Nayar village headman (desavari) originally appointed by the king or by the chief of the nad. The Nayar desavaris of a chiefdom collectively formed a subcaste ritually lower than the subcaste of chiefs of their kingdom. In Walluvanad and Calicut the subcaste of village headmen was called Kiriattil Nayar; in Cochin they were called Vellayma Nayars.

566 The landowning families in all of these types
622 of villages were called janmis. In every case,
423 no matter whether the janmi were of a patrilineal or a matrilineal caste, the eldest man of the extended family had legal guardianship of his own family, and in another sense, of the village lands and the lower caste inhabitants. [16] In addition to his economic rights, the janmi had administrative rights. First, he must sanction marriages of all castes in the village, none of which could be performed without his consent. Second came ambalapadhi or control of ceremonies in the village temple(s); and third urayma or direction of temple lands and servants.
[346] (It should be made clear that each village had its public temple apart from the larger temples of the chiefdom and the kingdom.) While headman of the village and a landowner in a certain sense, however, the janmi could not sell away his lands

565 without the direction of the chief. Usually, a
622 janmi family remained in situ over many generations.
423 In addition, the janmi was obliged to
lease off on long term tenure a large part of his
lands to Nayar retainers and could not retract
these without the tenant's consent or without the
aid of a public assembly of tenants in case of
ill-doing on the part of one of them.

621 Traditional villages are classifiable therefore
631 as 1) Braham; 2) Temple; 3) Royal; 4) Chiefly;
525 5) Nayar headmen's villages. In some areas,
644 a group of villages of the same type might be
found adjacent to each other; this was particularly
the case with "Brahman" and "Nayar headmen's"
villages, where four or five might form
a cluster headed by janmis of the same subcaste.
[17] In each village, subordinate to the janmi's
lineage in ritual rank and administrative power,
came the members of one or other subcaste of
701 Nayar retainers. Nayar retainers, whom I
shall also call Military Nayars since most of
them were soldiers, were divided into three
subcaste: 1) retainers of Nambudiri Brahmans
and of temples, called Sudra Nayars in Calicut
and Walluvanad and Illath Sudra Nayars in Cochin;
2) retainers of the royal lineage, or "palanquin-bearers,"
called Pallichans in all three
kingdoms; and 3) retainers of the chiefs and the
Nayar village headmen, called Charna Nayars
in Calicut and Walluvanad and Swaroopattil Sudra
264 Nayars in Cochin. Each of these subcastes
disputed for ritual rank and in everyday circumstances
would not interdine with each other.
This dispute for rank was possible because they

621 occupied separate sets of villages and were not
631 subject to each others' jurisdiction. In war,
565 however, they might interdine freely and spend
644 the night in each others' houses. In villages owned by Nambudiris or by Nambudiri-owned temples the retainer-Nayar were of group (1), in royal villages, of group (2), and in chiefly and village headmen's lineages, of group (3). In Calicut and Walluvanad however, group (3) was further subdivided into Agattu Charna Nayars or indoor retainers, [18] and Purattu Charnas or outdoor retainers. Purattu Charnas were retainers to chiefs and headmen, Agattu Charnas houseservants and clerks (with the title Menon - clerk) within the royal palaces. In Calicut, the Purattu Charnas were still further subdivided into ordinary Purattu Charnas who served chiefs and headmen, and special Purattu Charnas or Pariccha Menons who formed the personal bodyguard of the kind and senior princes.

613 In each village, there were traditionally four,
621 five or six matrilineages of the appropriate re-
427 tainer subcaste. The separate households or
566 property-groups within each lineage had the hereditary right, granted by the Raja, to occupy freely stretches of garden land, and to lease large plots of wet rice land on long-term tenure from the janmi. This tenure was called kanam; the tenant, a kanamdar or kanakkaran. At the start of a period of tenure, the legal guardian (oldest man or karánavan) of the Nayar retainer household paid a lump sum in cash to the janmi, called kanam. Thereafter he paid an annual rent

613 in kind, from which was deducted a small proportion
621 of the original cash sum. When the original
427 sum had been exhausted the kanakkaran
526 recommenced paying full rent, or renewed the
sum, or else surrendered the land. It seems
likely that these sums [19] of money were traditionally
paid only on the succession to headship
of a new janmi or a new kanakkaran on the
death of the old, or at irregular intervals convenient
to both parties. Both kanam and jenmam
rights could be sold, but a kanakkaran
could not be evicted without the consent of the
local Nayar assembly. The system allowed of
a certain degree of spatial mobility and of the
periodic segmentation of the Nayar property-group,
some branches of which might even
move to another village if lands became short.
On the whole, however, kanam tenures were of
long duration, and a Nayar property-group might
remain stable for several generations.

566 In addition to their role as tenants, members
of the retainer subcastes had other economic
and also ritual relations with their landlord.
[994] They were called adiyar (servants) of their janmi
and must attend and participate at his household
ceremonies. Women of the retainer lineages
[357] worked as house-servants of the janmi's
family, while older Nayar men who had retired
[427] from the army might be employed as bailiffs who
collected the janmi's rents and organized the
labour of his serfs.

564 In addition to the Nayars, members of certain
794 other aristocratic castes were usually present
in each village. These included the temple

564 servants, nowadays [20] collectively called Ambalavasis.
794 The highest of these were the Chakkyars or reciters of Puranic stories, and the
Pushpagans or flower-gatherers for temples.
[611] These two castes had a patrilineal descent-system
of the same type as Nambudiris, and are
said to have once been Nambudiris who were
degraded for ritual offences. They ranked below
Nambudiris and above Nayars and the matrilineal
temple servant castes. These latter included
[533] Nambyars, a small caste whose work was
to accompany Chakkyar recitations on a metal
drum; Psharodis and Variyars, both of whom
traditionally sweep the temple, clean temple
vessels and make garlands for the idols; Puduvals
or drummers on a drum called maddalam;
and Marars or regular drummers on another
drum called chenda.

The temple-servant castes were small and
were chiefly congregated in villages owned by
Nambudiri landlords or by large temples. Four
main types of temple were owned by the higher
castes of Malabar. First came large and wealthy
temples owned and managed entirely by
groups of Nambudiri landlords and dedicated to
one of the orthodox Brahmanical male deities of
India, usually Siva or Vishnu. Second came the
private temple of each individual Nambudiri family
in villages owned by Nambudiris; these were
small replicas of the first type, dedicated to the
same types of deities. Third came the large
temples, one of which was associated with each
[776] royal and chiefly matrilineage. These were
usually dedicated to Bhagavadi or Bhadrakali,
the Nayar goddess of war, small pox and the soil.

794 the Nayar goddess of war, smallpox and the 564 soil. Fourth came the smaller Bhagavadi temples of village Nayars, one of which was found in each village or group of villages of the same subcaste where Nayar retainers were present. [782] In the first two types of temples, animal sacrifice was forbidden; offerings were of flowers, fruits, incense and fire. The priests were [793] either Nambudiri Brahmans or members of a lower landless caste called Embrandiri Brahmans who are immigrant from South Canara to the north. Nayars might enter the outer courtyards of such temples but might not perform rites there. In a village which contained a temple of type (1), there was often no Nayar population at all: a group of lineages of one or more temple servant subcastes replaced them as retainers of the Nambudiris and as kanam tenants. In Nambudiri villages containing a temple of type (2), there would be one or two individual lineages of one or other temple servant caste, attached to the Nambudiri temple, but also a group of Nayar retainers with their own Bhagavadi temple. [22] In villages not headed by Nambudiri Brahmans, there might be only a Bhagavadi temple, managed collectively by Nayars. One lineage of the Marar caste might also be present to drum in the temple, but the other temple servant castes did not work in village Bhagavadi temples. Similarly in a royal or chiefly village containing a large Bhagavadi temple owned by the ruling lineage, the temple servant castes might be absent except for one lineage of Marars, but individuals of the

564 other temple servant castes might come from 994 other villages to assist at special annual ceremonies. In royal and chiefly Bhagavadi temples [787] the priest was usually a Nambudiri Brahman, though a Nayar shaman was attached to the temple and periodically became possessed by the goddess and declared her will to the people. [793] In village Nayar Bhagavadi temples, the priest was either an Embrandiri Brahman hired by the Nayars, or a Nayar; there was in addition a Nayar shaman. Daily rites in the Bhagavadi [782] temple were similar to those in a Nambudiri temple, but annual ceremonies involved animal sacrifice by Nayars, in which Brahmans and [252] temple servants took no part. Consistent with these differences in ritual behaviour, Nambudiris and all temple servants were vegetarians; royal, chiefly and Nayar castes ate meat. The matrilineal castes of temple servants were otherwise almost identical in general culture to Nayars, and historically were probably once Nayars. Among temple servants, Nambyars, Psharodis, Variyars and Puduvals disputed for ritual rank and would not interdine or intermarry. They ranked roughly [23] parallel to the chiefs of districts (with whom they had few social relations and did not interdine) and above the retainer-Nayars, who might receive food from them but not give food to them. Marars ranked below the other temple servant castes and parallel to Nayars, with whom they had few social relations outside the temple, and did not interdine or intermarry.

Below all these aristocratic castes in ritual

564 rank came certain small castes of middle class,
774 non-military Nayars whose work was connected
with temples. Vattekads were oil-mongers for
temples, Odatt Nayars, temple tile-makers;
and Andura Nayars temple pot-makers. One
Vattekad lineage was present in each village to
supply oil to the temple; its members might receive
good from all the higher castes but might
not give to them. Often, the headman of the
Vattekad lineage was also the shaman of the
[791] Nayar Bhagavadi temple. Odatt and Andura Nayars
were very small castes, usually with one lineage
to about six villages.

564 Below the middle class Nayars in rank came
three castes of servant-Nayars, also non-military:
[764] Chidigans or funeral priests of the higher
matrilineal castes, Veluthedans or washermen
[305] of all the castes above them; and Vilakkataravans
[296] or barbers of all the castes above them.
One lineage of each of these castes was usually
present in each village. Chidigans ranked above
barbers and washermen, who disputed for rank
and would not interdine or intermarry.

[361] In each village, all of the castes so far mentioned
(provided they were present) were called
"high," "good" [24] or "clean" castes and lived
in a separate portion of the village, each house
in its own large garden, round the temples and
the local janmi's house. Except for Nayar barbers
and washermen, all might enter either Nambudiri
or Nayar temples. Within this group,
[783] lower castes were forbidden to touch higher
castes because of ritual pollution, but individuals
of different castes might approach each other
within a few feet.

564 within a few feet. Equal interdining took place
[264] only between members of the same caste or subcaste,
but at a higher caste feast members of
lower castes might receive food from higher
caste hosts. The Nambudiris, royalty, chiefs,
temple servants, retainers, middle-class and
servant Nayars thus collectively formed the
"good" castes of the society. Nambudiris and
[611] two small castes of their temple servants were
patrilineal; all the rest were matrilineal. (1)

Below all these castes, living in a separate
[361] part of the village, were the "low" or "polluting"
[783] castes. These included in order of rank,
Iravas or toddy-tappers and tenant-farmers, with
20 to 50 households per village; Kanisans (astrologers)
with one to three households per village;
the artisan castes (blacksmiths, goldsmiths,
carpenters, bell-metal workers and
stone-masons, who ranked equally) each with one
to three houses per village; low caste washermen
and barbers (who ranked equally) each with one
to five houses per village; and bow-makers, each
with about one to ten houses per village. Iravas,
[611] Kanisans, washermen and barbers had double
[595] unilineal descent: [25] patrilineal, patrilocal extended
[614] families with fraternal polyandry, cross-cut
by large exogamous dispersed matrilineal
clans. Artisans and bow-makers had patrilineal
descent with patrilocal extended families and
[437] fraternal polyandry. All of these castes worked
for each other and for the "good" castes of the
524 village. Iravas, the most numerous and influential,
427 owned their own house-sites and leased rice-lands
and other garden lands from the matrilineal

564 kanam tenants of the village, on a triennial tenure
427 (verum-pattam) retaining about one-fifth of
the produce for their own sustenance and paying
564 the rest as rent in kind. One or more small
437 patrilineal groups of each of the other castes had
what was called a desam avakasam or "village
right," namely the right to work exclusively for
members of their natal village. Sometimes, in
the case of small castes such as astrologers and
barbers, the right might extend to several adjacent
villages who collectively shared the labour
of one servant family. Avakasams were hereditary
in patrilineal groups; they involved payment
in paddy and vegetables by each patron household,
of whatever caste, after the two harvests
of the year, and the right to take part in village
festivals and be fed at higher caste festivals and
marriages.

[791] Astrologers and artisans were hired by all the
higher castes of the village, by each other and
[305] by Iravas who ranked above them. Barbers
worked for all the lower polluting castes of this
group, but not for the "good" castes who employed
[296] the Nayar barber. Washermen laundered
for all the lower polluting castes but not regularly
for the "good" castes, who employed the Nayar
washerman; however, the low [26] caste washerman's
lineage must provide clean cloths for the
"good" castes after death, menstruation and
childbirth and had ritual obligations to high
caste women on the two latter occasions. Bow-
564 makers served Nayars and Iravas. Each of the
783 lower polluting castes was endogamous and interdined
equally only within the caste. Rules of

564 ritual pollution decreed that the several lower
783 castes might not touch each other, and that members
of each lower caste, according to their ritual
rank, must refrain from approaching members
of the "good" castes within distance ranging
from 15 to 40 feet.

564 Finally, on the outskirts of the village, in a
[361] separate area, lived the serf-castes of Parayas
437 and Pulayas. Parayas were a small caste of basket
and umbrella-makers; in each village two or
three households had a village right to serve all
castes above them. Pulayas were until 1850 the
agricultural serfs of Nayars, temple-servants
and Nambudiris. Each property-group of these
castes owned one or more families of Pulayas
as its ancestral property who could be bought
and sold. Food, household materials and clothing
were provided for serfs by their owners. The
Pulayas were freed by law in 1850, since when
they have been landless agricultural labourers
serving the "good" castes and Iravas for daily
[783] wages in kind. As "exterior" castes, Parayas
and Pulayas may not approach "good" castes
within a distance of about 60 feet and may not
enter the "good" area of the village or walk on
the main roads. (These rules were however
abolished by law at Independence in 1947.) [27]
Each caste is endogamous and the two may not
[611] interdine. Unlike the higher castes they have a
bilateral kinship system without unilineal descent
groups. In addition to these Hindu castes
361 there were and are in Kerala large groups of
563 Muslims and Christians. (2) Christians had
their separate villages and were divided into
castes in a similar manner to Hindus. Muslims

361 lived in bazaar streets in the towns, or sometimes
563 in separate villages, where they were
served by low caste Hindu labourers; alternatively
small groups of them might occupy Hindu
villages where they had the ritual rank of Iravas
(from whom they were chiefly converted), and
usually held lands on the same terms of triennial
tenure from Nayar kanakker.

564 The lower polluting castes and the exterior
783 castes had their own small temples, dedicated
to their own deities. They were forbidden to
approach the temples of the "good" castes and
564 might not take part in daily worship there. Annually,
796 however, a large temple festival was
571 held in each Nayar, chiefly or royal Bhagavadi
temple. At such a festival, representatives of
all the lower castes of the village attended and
performed ceremonies and dances peculiar to
their caste at approriate distances from the temple.
Such festivals apparently reinforced the
mutual rights and obligations of the several
castes and dramatized the solidarity and also the
social distance between them. In accordance
with the normal range of their social relations,
members of the lower castes usually attended suc
festivals only in their own or adjacent villages.
At the festivals of the chiefly temple of the nad,
however, members of "good" castes throughout
the nad were required to participate; similarly,
at festivals of the royal temples, representatives
of the "good" castes throughout the kingdom were
called to attend and express their allegiance to
the ruler and his deity.

.437(2) The Traditional Economic System

423 The kanam tenure had significance as an institution
which linked the system of payments
in kind, found within the inland villages, to the
[433] cash economy of the coastal towns. Traditionally,
each village appears to have been self-sufficient
for the basic necessities of life. The
high castes paid lower caste servants daily or
thrice annually in paddy and the lower castes
traded services and some goods with each other
with paddy as their medium of exchange. Irava
tenants paid their rents in paddy to Nayar kanakkar,
who in turn paid a much smaller rent in
paddy to the janmi.

Nayar men, however, though they lived mainly
from the produce of their estates, were also paid
in cash by the Raja in return for military service.
[436] The use of money was otherwise confined mainly
to the coast-towns and to overseas' trade with
the Arabs, Portuguese, Dutch, French and English
in pepper and other commodities. This
trade was largely carried on by the Muslims,
who were originally, from the ninth century,
converted from the lower Hindu castes by Arab
[442] traders. Muslim middlemen obtained pepper
from cultivators of inland and foothill villages
in return for cloth obtained from overseas, or
manufactured by Hindu castes of weavers in the
towns. They traded the pepper for cash to Arabs
[651] and Europeans. The royal lineage obtained revenue
by several kinds of taxes levelled on this
merchandise, and paid the Nayar armies from
its coffers. The Nayars in turn made periodic
kanam cash payments to Nambudiri and other

437 landlords, who would otherwise, apparently, have
423 been excluded from the cash economy. Such
[511] money could be spent by the Nambudiri and Nayar
aristocracy on clothing and imported luxury
goods available in Muslim bazaars in the towns.
Some Muslims also held kanam lands in villages
whence they could obtain rice and vegetables.
Others bought food for cash from Nayar tenants.
[556] Apart from the kanam tenure the use of cash was,
however, extremely restricted in inland villages,
and surplus cash was converted into gold ornaments
or other objects of ostentation. Among
[583] the lower castes small coins had a symbolic
value, and a fixed number were handed over in
marriage payments, but their use in economic
exchange among the lower castes appears to have
been negligible.

434 In spite therefore of the considerable overseas
554 trade, the complex division of labour, and the
marked differences in wealth (expressed chiefly
in size of houses, differences of clothing and
jewelry, and types of food) between the several
castes, the overall economy of Kerala in the
traditional period was relatively stationary, and
such social mobility as there was, was confined
to the Muslims, Christians and "good" Hindu
castes above Nayar retainers. It appears to
[613] have been this fact which permitted the persistence
[631] of such a relatively rigid feudal system
and the existence, within each homogeneous local
caste group, of a lineage system as the main organizing
principle.

000 (3) Traditional Political Administration

(3) Traditional Political Administration

642 565 The "middle class" non-military Nayars, the Nayar servant castes of menials, all the lower polluting castes, and the serfs, were excluded from the administrative system of the kingdom. Above these castes, the "good" castes formed two hierarchies, the one concerned with the public ritual of the state, and the other with secular administration. The first hierarchy comprised Nambudiris and temple servants; the second, royalty, chiefs and Nayar retainers. Nambudiris were largely outside the legal system of the kingdom; temple servants, though subject to it, took no part in its administration. Political organization was in the hands of the Nayars, their chiefs, and their royal lineage.

643 701 631 While responsible for maintaining traditional unwritten law and custom (mamool) among the several castes, the kings were concerned chiefly with amassing soldiers for their armies. Though in each kingdom the royal lineage owned the land in many villages as its private estate, its strength was estimated not in territory but in numbers of Nayar soldiers. Each nad and each desam was classified according to the number of Nayar men it could customarily muster for war; records[31]of these were kept by the
702 Nayar clerks of the palaces. The chief duty of each naduvari was to assemble regularly the soldiers of his nad for military exercises, and in time of war to lead them to battle with the king himself at their head. Within the nad military training was organized on a village basis, sometimes by the Nayar desavari, or, in those villages without a Nayar headman, by a Nayar

702 military leader (Asan) appointed by the chief.
557] Each desam had its gymnasium (kalari) into which
all retainer-Nayar boys were inducted at the age
of seven. Their training in gymnastics and
swordsmanship lasted nine years, after which
they received their arms at the hand of the king
701 and were accorded the title of Nayar. After this
age every able-bodied Nayar man was perpetually
in military training until he reached the age of
retirement or until he was obliged to succeed to
the headship of his matrilineal property-group
541] and retire to manage its lands. In peacetime,
mock fights were organized between Nayars of
adjacent villages or of adjacent nads, and jousting
was conducted at the court for the entertainment
726 ment of the royal family. In war, the Nayars
714] fought naked: their arms were the sword, bow,
lance and the bow and arrow, though gunpowder
was also used, at least by the more important
Rajas. Battles between enemy kingdoms appear
to have been stylized. Not more than 10,000
men were commonly brought into the field at one
time, and severe loss of life was prevented by
the employment of Nambudiri emissaries who, if
fighting became intense, entered the battle field
and arbitrated between its leaders. [32] If however
the king or a chief were slain, his subjects
must fight to the death until their honour was
avenged by the slaughter of a corresponding
leader on the enemy side. The aim of such
721 battles appears to have been solely to gain control
over the military power of nads of adjacent
kingdoms, together with certain payments of
tribute by conquered chieftains, and also to gain

721 temporary ritual privileges in the important Nambudiri-managed temples of alien kingdoms. Several times rights in such a temple were obtained by an alien ruler, and held for a period of years at the cost of repeated battles with the king within whose territory the temple stood.

643 The power of the king to command his Nayar
701 retainers was checked by periodic assemblies
664 of Nayars (koottams). If the king's foreign policy were disfavoured by the Nayars of a particular nad, or if their own chief failed to pay them promptly, the village military leaders, with some of their followers, assembled in a body called a nad koottam and threatened to defect to some alien ruler. This occasionally happened: cases are recorded of the defection of a whole nad from one ruler to another. Similarly within the desam, small assemblies called desa-koottams might force their policy on their local leader or stage a strike until they compelled him to pay them their dues.

692 Within the kingdom, justice was administered
681 at several levels. First, each local caste group had its own periodic assembly of adult men to punish offences against caste law [33] and to arbitrate in small civil disputes within the caste. For the larger castes of Iravas and Pulayas the local caste group was the village: married men met periodically to arrange public ceremonies of their caste and punish offenders. These comprised chiefly wrongful interdining, small debts, thefts and assaults within the caste, and intracaste adultery. Fines for the upkeep of the caste

692 shrine and temporary ostracism were the chief
681 punishments, but at least among Iravas, grave
offenders were sometimes excommunicated with
the consent of the janmi and sold in slavery to
623 Arab traders. The smaller castes of village
servants each had their own assemblies extending
over a group of adjacent villages, who met
[582] chiefly at marriages and funerals. In all of these
castes, the local group of the assembly, while
not strictly endogamous, was the group within
which the majority of marriages took place.

631 Among retainer-Nayars, the local group might
692 comprise either one large desam, or a group of
681 two to four adjacent desams when these were
occupied by retainer Nayars of the same subcaste.
Such an area was called a tara in South
Malabar and a kara in Cochin, the assembly,
a tara-koottam or kara-yogam. The assembly
comprised the headmen of all Nayar property-groups
who met to settle intra-caste disputes,
adjudicate in trials of offences against caste law,
and arrange the public ceremonies of their common
Bhagavadi temple. Offences such as wrongful
interdining with low caste men, small debts,
thefts and adultery with women of the lower polluting
castes were punished by fines paid to [34]
the Bhagavadi temple, or in grave cases by excommunication,
and sale into slavery. Similarly
intra-caste offences were settled among desavaris
within an assembly of the nad, and among
nadavaris within an assembly of the kingdom.
The local Nayar assembly also had power to arbitrate
in disputes and offences against the village
at large among the lower castes. Some

631 cases were carried voluntarily by low caste
692 disputants of different castes to the Nayar assembly,
681 but this might also step in by forces in disputes which threatened the peace of the village. Punishments included beatings and fines
[564] to the temple. However, Nayars and Nambudiris had also the power of life and death over their serfs and might have these killed without recourse to a higher authority. Any Nayar had, for example, the right to spear at sight a Pulaya who accidentally touched him, refused to recede from his approach, or insulted a Nayar woman.

681 In the castes above the serfs, grave crimes
692 were carried to the court of the king. Murder, sacrilege, the wounding of a cow or of a Brahman, and theft from a man of "good" caste, were punishable by death. Brahmans and women, however, were never officially put to death. Brahmans were excommunicated by their own assemblies, women were sold into slavery with the Arabs. If, however, a Nayar woman fornicated with a man of lower caste (an offence legally punishable by excommunication and slavery) it is recorded that in fact her own brothers, with the tacit consent of [35] the ruler, would themselves spear her to death. The death sentence for men of the polluting castes was impalement, for Nayars, spearing, and for Muslims, hanging. Unsolved civil disputes between high caste men and Muslims were tried in the royal court by ordeal, usually of boiling oil.

564 It is interesting to notice that the higher the
571 caste, the wider the field of social relations.
631 For the serfs and lower polluting castes, this

514 was confined to the village or (in the case of the
571 smaller castes) a group of adjacent villages.
631 For retainer-Nayars, apart from their excursions in war, it was confined to the group of adjacent villages of one subcaste; for temple servants and Nayar village headmen, the nad; for naduvaris and kings, the kingdom; and for Nambudiris, Kerala. It may be hypothesized that this variation in the field of social relations of the different ranked orders of the society is intrinsic in any feudal system with centralized political institutions.

582 (4) Hypergamy in the Upper Castes

611 Each of the castes below middle class Nayars was endogamous, as is usually in the caste system throughout India. But among the higher "clean" castes, a complicated system of hypergamous unions linked the several groups. By hypergamy I mean the union of a man of higher caste with a woman of lower caste.

582 In discussing hypergamy, it is necessary first
611 to explain the descent-system of Nambudiris.
596 In the patrilineal [36] extended family of Nambudiris, only the eldest son was permitted to marry, with Vedic rites, within his own caste and beget children for his family. Younger sons
[595] had recognized liaisons (not initiated with Vedic rites and regarded by Nambudiris not as marriage but as concubinage) with women of the matrilineal castes, whose children belonged to the mother's caste and lineage by matrilineal descent. However, if in any generation the eldest Nambudiri son was was sterile, the second son

596 might marry a Nambudiri woman and beget 611 children for his family. Nambudiri spinsters, 582 of whom there were many, remained in their natal houses and were maintained by their kinsmen. [595] The eldest son of a Nambudiri family might however have several Nambudiri wives and also several Nayar concubines. Nambudiri younger sons lived and ate in their natal households, headship of which passed from the eldest son down the line of his brothers and then dropped to the eldest son in the filial generation. In this way the Nambudiri family was prevented from splitting into segments, and was enabled to maintain its position on the ancestral estate over [597] many generations. If in any generation a family had no son, succession was ensured by the adoption of a daughter's husband or of a man of a family related in the cognatic line.

613 In the royal lineages, since each lineage, 582 though exogamous, regarded itself as a separate 837 caste and admitted no peers, sexual unions were entirely hypergamous. In Cochin and Walluvanad, royal women had liaisons only with [37] Nambudiris of the highest and wealthiest subcastes within the kingdom; royal men, with women of chiefly, village headmen or retainer Nayar lineages. In the Calicut lineage, which came to power later and took time to establish its ritual rank, royal women till the 18th century had liaisons either with Nambudiri men or with men of the ancient royal lineages of tributary kingdoms, who though through conquest were subordinate to the upstart Zamorins, were still regarded by them as of higher ritual rank. Later

613 582 837 when they had established themselves as of high ritual rank, and when some of their vassal lineages had died out, the Zamorins too looked only to Nambudiri for genitors. Royal men similarly had liaisons with women of the lower matrilineal subcastes, as in the Cochin and Walluvanad kingdoms.

582 837 Among temples servants, retainer-Nayars and middle class Nayars, the majority of unions took place between individuals of the same subcaste. A small proportion of retainer and middle class Nayar women had liaisons with Nambudiris of the lower subcastes, Embrandiri Brahman priests (who followed the same descent system as Nambudiris) or with royal, chiefly, village headmen or temple servant men. In the Nayar village headmen's lineages, a larger proportion of women had liaisons with men of the chiefly or royal lineages, or with Nambudiris; and in the chiefs' lineages, with royal or Nambudiri men, though in these subcastes too, individuals of the same subcaste but different lineages might have unions with each other. Similarly, a small [38] proportion of men in each Nayar subcaste, down to retainers, had liaisons with Nayar women of a lower subcaste, down to the rank of middle class Nayars. Chart I shows the mutual ritual ranking and the direction of hypergamous unions between the higher castes of the kingdom. In the temple servant castes, whose occupational allegiance was exclusively with Nambudiris, women had liaisons either with Nambudiris or with men of their own caste. There was no intermarriage either way between temple

582 servant castes or between temple servants on
837 the one hand and royalty, chiefs or village headmen, who belonged to separate hierarchies.

Hypergamous unions, even more than other
582 unions between Nayars of the same subcaste,
613 emphasized the exclusively sexual role of the
837 lovers and genitors of a Nayar lineage. In most circumstances a higher caste lover lived and ate in his natal household and was maintained by it; he visited his mistress after supper and left before breakfast, after which he took a purifying bath before re-entering his natal house. He might not eat in his mistress's household, and following the morning bath might not touch her or his children. The only exception to these
[144] residential rules arose in the case of Nambudiris who had liaisons with royal women. These were received as temporary occupants of the palace and housed in separate buildings at the expense of the royal lineage, at some distance from the buildings occupied by the princes and the royal women. Like all other Nambudiri genitors of Nayar children, however, they [39] visited their mistresses at night and in the daytime carried out their ritual duties in private, attended by their own Nambudiri cooks and serving men.

613 It is clear however that hypergamous liaisons,
837 though of an almost exclusively sexual nature,
571 knit together the several castes concerned with the secular administration and with the religious law and public rituals of the state. Though not recognized by them as kinsmen, elderly members of aristocratic Nayar and temple servant

613 lineages still take pride in the fact that for cen-
437 turies, their lineages have been partly fathered
571 by men of the higher castes of royalty, chiefs,
and (particularly) priests. The allegiance of Nayar soldiers to their headmen, of headmen to their chiefs, and of chiefs to the king, was undoubtedly strengthened by this network of sexual ties, as was the unity of the secular and religious hierarchies, which might otherwise have been opposed.

613 IV The Traditional Lineage System of the Nayars

(1) Structure and Functions

[621] In each traditional village, four to six "military" Nayar lineages of one subcaste was present as retainers of the janmi. The retainer lineage commonly had a depth of nine to twelve generations and usually comprised between 12 to 100 members, It was called a taravad, derived from tara, the word for the raised foundation on which a house is built. Taravad can mean both the members of a lineage, living and dead, and the ancestral house from which they sprang: it corresponds to the English "house" in its sense both of ancestry and place. The members of a taravad are a group, usually of actual and not merely putative matrilineal kin, descended from a common ancestress (whose name may or may not be known), but they describe themselves as a group whose matrilineal forbears once lived in one house. That their lineage should be associated with the house befits the sedentary economy of the Nayars and the importance of their ancestral land. Powerful

613 Powerful emotional ties bind a Nayar to his ancestral
[342] land and to his house, which is large and beautifully
constructed of whitewashed laterite, carved
wooden pillars and a tiled roof. The lineage-names
of retainer-Nayars are the names of original
ancestral sites in the village, e.g., Kirakkutt
Velappil ("Eastern Garden"). Desavari
lineages take the name of their desam, chiefly
lineages of their nad, and royal lineages of their
kingdom. The knowledge that their matrilineal
forbears once jointly owned a house and land
holds lineage-members together.

[361] Except in unusual circumstances (i.e., if it
is dying out) a lineage comprises several households,
traditionally congregated in separate gardens
some distance apart on a stretch of dry land
613 in the village. Today with the vast increase in
596 population during British rule, a lineage may
comprise up to 20 or more households; traditionally,
it seems usually to have contained
about four to ten. Each of these households
comprised a segment of the lineage, [41] usually,
a group of siblings together with the children
and daughters' children of the sisters. The
household was also the unit whose members
jointly owned ancestral garden land, kanam rice
lands and movable property: I call it a property-group.
The lineage as a whole (unless it were
dying out and comprised only one property-group)
owned no property in common and its
members had no economic cooperation as a
group.

613 The lineage was exogamous, and matrilineal
kinship terms were extended throughout its

613 range. The rule of exogamy, and the sense of close kinship which bound members of a lineage meant that the local subcaste group of the kara (whether this comprised one or more lineages) was divided into a small number of compact groups. At assemblies the members separated out into lineage groupings. Only the legal heads (karanavans) of property-groups attended such assemblies, and within each lineage these tended to defer to each other on the basis of age, spokesmanship being left to the eldest man(also sometimes called a karanavan) of the lineage as a whole.

613
681 Though it owned no property in common, the lineage was in some contexts a corporate group in the sense of having legal responsibility for its members' acts. If some member of a lineage broke a caste law, for example by dining or fornicating with a low caste person or failing to pay dues to the temple, his whole lineage was temporarily ostracized by the assembly until it called him to book. [42] His property-group must then pay a fine (prayaschittam) to the assembly and he must go through a rite of purification before his lineage could be readmitted to caste. In cases of grave offence such as fornication with a Paraya woman, his lineage was during British rule ostracized until he had been excommunicated from lineage and caste and his funeral rites performed; during native rule until he had been executed by order of the chief of the king.

613
628 In other ways, the lineage held itself responsible for disputes entered into by its members.

613 Even in the last 50 years, quarrels between men
628 of different lineages, usually over field-boundaries or women, have resulted in prolonged hostility, sometimes with fighting, between their lineages. In South Malabar and Cochin, such hostility between individual lineages could not take the form of actual blood-feuds (kudipaga) such as were known in the politically less centralized area of North Malabar. These were prevented by the strong organization of the village assembly, the power of desavari and naduvari, and the existence of the royal court. Fighting between groups of men of different lineages, as between groups of men of adjacent villages owing allegiance to different and sometimes mutually hostile desavaris, was soon stopped by the appropriate local authority - the desavari in the first case and the naduvari in the second. If however a Nayar were slain by a man of another lineage, his matrilineal kinsmen had the right sanctioned by the king to place his body in the [43] house or the outhouse of his slayer and burn house and coprse together. His lineage might then, after paying a fee to the naduvari, select one of their number to fight a duel to the death with a chosen man of the slayer's lineage in order to avenge the murder. The lineage was thus a corporate group in contexts involving murder and offences against the religious laws of the caste, though the property-group was the corporate group in contexts involving disputes over property.

613
602 The individual lineage was linked to its local
621 subcastes assembly by the institution of enangar.

613 602 621 In a retainer subcaste group, enangar relations usually existed between each lineage and two, three or four others; in the small servant caste local groups, each lineage might have only one or two enangar lineages. Enangar relations were reciprocal but not exclusive, so that a chain of relationships linked together the whole local group. Thus in a hypothetical kara containing eight retainer lineages, A to H, lineage A might have enangar relations with B, C and D; B, with A, E and F; C with A, G and H; D with A, F and G; E, with B, F and H; F with B, D and E; and G only with D and C. The enangar relationship was one of ceremonial neighbourliness and ritual cooperation. Sexual unions were also, and in some villages are still today, most common between enangar lineages, so that the enangar relationship can also be regarded as one of perpetual affinal kinship between lineages as corporate groups. Representative male and [881] female members of all enangar lineages must [765] be present and participate in ceremonies of the linked lineage at girls' initiations, at the first [769] menstruation ceremonies of a girl, at the sixteenth day ceremonies after a death in the lineage; and at ceremonial offerings to the spirit of a dead matrilineal forbear on the anniversary of the death. These ceremonies could not be carried out without the help of enangar, so that to refuse attendance was a grave offence. If however some member of a lineage broke a caste-law, the enangar, as its hereditary ritual partners, must at once announce a rupture of their ties with the offending lineage and call a

662 subcaste assembly to discuss the case and take
613 appropriate action. Until this was done, they
621 might not resume their ties or attend ceremonies
of the offending lineage. The enangar thus formally represented the local subcaste group to the individual lineage.

613 Enangar played their most important role at
881 the initiation rites of the girls of a linked lineage.
836 Every ten to twelve years, each lineage held a
581 grand ceremony in its oldest ancestral house,
at which all immature girls of the lineage were on one day ritually "married" by men of enangar groups. This ceremony, called talikettukalyanam (tali-tying marriage) (3) must be performed for each girl before puberty on pain of her excommunication from caste. Before it took place, elders of the subcaste assembly selected suitable young men of the enangar lineages as ritual bridegrooms for the girls. At the ceremony, each ritual bridegroom, in the company of representatives of every lineage in the kara, tied a gold ornament (tali) round the neck of his chosen "bride." After this each couple was secluded in a room of the ancestral house for a period of four days and nights during which, if the girl were old enough, cohabitation might take place. At the end of the four days, the couples were again led before the assembled company where each tore in two the loincloth worn by the girl during the period of seclusion. They were then
581 considered ritually divorced and had no further
613 practical obligations to each other. The girls
885 were now regarded as having attained the status
of mature women, ready to bear children to perpetuate their lineage.

58/ perpetuate their lineage. Shortly before or after
613 puberty, they might, following this ceremony,
enter without religious rites into sexual liaisons
621 (called sambandham - "joining together") with
58/ one or more men of their own or an appropriate
613 higher subcaste, including, if they wished, the
man who had tied the tali. These men visited them in their natal houses at night. Similarly a Nayar man, (whether or not he had ever performed a tali-rite) might enter into relationships with any number of women of his own or an appropriate lower subcaste. These marital customs are further discussed below: here it is relevant to point only to the role of the enangar bridegroom. Since the enangar stand to the lineage as formal representatives of the local subcaste group, it seems appropriate to interpret the tali-rite as a ceremony at which the [46] subcaste group as a whole "married" the immature girls of the lineage as a whole, and ritually set free their procreative powers for the perpetuation of their lineage. It was also significant in that it appears that in general among the Nayars, enangar relationships between lineages (i.e., hereditary intergroup relationships) fulfilled the functions of integrating the total local community which in many unilineal systems (e.g., the patrilineal system of the lower castes) are fulfilled by interpersonal cognatic and affinal ties. This was possible, and necessary, because the marital tie was so weak among Nayars that all the interpersonal kinship ties between individuals of different lineages were also insufficiently stable to carry these functions of ritual and other social cooperation.

000 ritual and other social cooperation.

613 (2) Ritual Cooperation in the Lineage

783 In addition to the joint performance of the pre-puberty marriage rite, members of a lineage were united in ritual observances at a birth or death. On each of these occasions, all members fell for fourteen days into a condition of ritual pollution (pula) in which they might not touch, eat with, or enter into the houses of other members of their caste, enter the public temples or bathing pools of the village, enter their own ancestor shrines, sacred snake groves or other sacred places of their lineage, or take part in everyday social life. This period of ritual pollution resembled one of temporary excommunication from caste, the only difference being that those ostracized were regarded by others with special friendliness rather than hostility. It effectively set apart the lineage as a solidary group at times of crisis in its history, and gave recognition to their joint concern with increase or decrease in their membership.

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794 Lineage members were also united in worship of the lineage goddess or dharma devi ("goddess of moral law"). This goddess, named differently in different lineages, is a species of the common Nayar goddess Bhagavadi, and in this context was probably though of as a primeval ancestress of the lineage, though I lack data definitely to indicate this. Her idol was housed in a small shrine in the precincts of the oldest ancestral house, or sometimes in the courtyard of the village temple. She was believed capable of

613
794 inflicting or witholding sickness and all types of misfortune to the lineage, and, to ward off these, was propitiated with offerings of cooked food annually and in special emergencies on the advice of the astrologer as diviner. In particular, she[1]
[842] had power to bless with fertility women of the lineage, and so was worshipped before a pre-puberty marriage rite and also at the first menstruation ceremonies of a girl.

[778] Though not jointly owned by the lineage but rather by that branch of it which inherited the gardens on which they stood, the oldest ancestral house of the lineage, from which its forbears sprang, the original ancestor shrine in this house, and the sacred snake-grove in its [48] garden, were regarded with reverence by all lineage-members and stood as symbols of their unity. These are discussed below in connection with rites relating to the property-group.

613 (3) Fission and adoption in the Lineage

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621 Since lineages were usually groups of actual and not putative matrilineal kin, it was inevitable that (since the birthrate is not uniform throughout a population) while some might remain stable in numbers over generations, others would expand greatly, and others would decrease and become in danger of extinction. When great growth in numbers in a lineage took place, some segments appear even traditionally to have hived off to other villages occupied by their own sub-caste where kanam paddy lands and janmam garden lands were available. Such a segment, on moving to a new village, was adopted as retainers

[1] [the dharma devi, or lineage goddess---Analyst]

613 by the local janmi, was formally accepted into
608 the Nayar assembly of its new area, and was
621 accorded enangar relations with some of the lineages already present. If the incoming segment was small, it was customary for it to ally itself with one or other established lineages for the performance of the first tali-rite. This set up a bond of fictitious matrilineal kinship between the new segment and the old lineage, which must henceforth observe exogamy. Such fictitious matrilineal kinship, while serving to keep stable the size and number of exogamous groups in the village, was relevant only to intergroup relations in the microcosmic political life of [49] the village and not to matters which concerned only lineage members and had to do with their interpersonal family life. Thus, death and birth pollutions were not extended to include the incoming segment, which for several generations observed these in common with other segments of its parent-lineage, and with them also continued to worship the lineage goddess in their ancestral village. After some generations, however, the old matrilineal ties were forgotten or (if distance from the parent lineage was great) deliberately sundered, until in time even the rule of exogamy might unwittingly be broken and a division of the original lineage finally completed. If it had increased in numbers the new segment became a complete lineage in its own right; if not, it might gradually come to be regarded as a "real" genealogical branch of its host lineage in the new village.

Even within one village, a lineage might

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621
become so large that over many generations members of distant segments forgot that they were matrilineal kin, ceased to observe joint pollution, and finally broke the rule of exogamy. One case of this came to my notice in the Cochin village I studied. A man and woman of two lineages which were not enangar, and for some reason unknown to my informants, had never been known to intermarry, entered into a liaison. Certain elders of the village then began to look into the history of the two lineages and to wonder whether long ago, they might have been matrilineal kin or putative matrilineal kin by joint performance of the [50] tali-rite. As they were unable to foist their doubts on to younger members of the village, however, the liaison continued and thus what was probably an ancient tie of lineage exogamy was tacitly broken.

[597] Cases of extinction of a lineage were rare, since if one property group were without women in any generation it was customary to adopt one or more girls from collateral property groups of the same lineage and thus continue to perpetuate all the property-groups. In rare cases of the extinction of a lineage, its jenmam lands eschested to the king for reallocation to another lineage, and its kanam lands to the janmi. Today, the property of a group with no women is divided equally between surviving male members and inherited after their deaths by their wives and children.

613 (4) Succession and Segmentation in the Lineage

587 Among retainer Nayars whose lineages owned

613 587 no political office, the role of oldest man of the lineage was unimportant. His voice was heard respectfully in the village assembly, he might be regarded as an authority on traditional custom, and he was accorded special respect as an arbitrator in village disputes. He had, however, no sanctioned authority within the lineage and could be set politely aside by the heads of its other property-groups in crucial matters affecting joint action by the group. Overall headship in the lineage became important only for desavaris, chiefs and royalty where political office was vested in the oldest man, [51] irrespective of branch. Even here, however, authority inhered chiefly in the political office and could be exercised (in a political sense) only over members of lower subcastes and (in a kinship sense) over members of the office-bearer's own property-group. A king, chief or village headman had no rights to interfere in the management of other property-groups of his own lineage, each of which had its separate karanavan as legal guardian of its members. Indeed in the case of most royal and chiefly lineages, the senior office-bearer had no rights to management even in the property-group into which he was born: he was set apart on a separate landed estate and headship of his property-group passed to the next younger man. The dimension of authority, like that of economic cooperation, was therefore absent from the lineage and inhered instead in the hierarchy of political offices on the one hand, and in individual property-groups on the other.

613 Within each lineage, even today when it may

6/13 comprise ten to twenty property-groups, exact genealogical relationships, and the order of segmentation of the several branches, are usually though not invariably known by elders. Members of very distantly related segments of the same lineage may however gradually cease to use kinship terms for each other and in any case tend to feel less strong emotional ties for each other than do members of more recently partitioned segments. These are of course closest [52] between property groups which have recently partitioned, those whose recent ancestresses were all born in one house. The order of segmentation of the lineage is also recognized in that should a property-group be allowed to die out, its property customarily reverts in equal shares to segments of the same order as itself - those which formed one unit with it before the most recent partition - rather than to the lineage as a whole.

But in other ways, the order of segmentation in a lineage is unimportant for the structuring of social relations. Segments intermediate between the property-group and the lineage have no special property, activities or ceremonies, and no headmen, and their members never meet to the exclusion of other lineage members. Neither do whole intermediate segments oppose [627] each other in quarrels between their individual members. These remain restricted to the property-groups of the disputants and are normally settled voluntarily through appeal to some popular arbitrator of the village or, if they become serious, are forcibly settled by intervention of the assembly.

613 the assembly.

Though the order of segmentation is known in the taravad and is relevant to reversion of property, to the emotional strength of matrilineal ties, and to ultimate division of the group into new exogamous taravads, the Nayars cannot therefore be said to have a lineage in the strict British sense of a system in which "minimal groups of unilineal kin combine into larger groups in contrast to [53] other groups of like nature which in turn combine until a maximal lineage or clan is formed as a capstone to the whole structure." (4) However, since it does not appear certain that matrilineal lineages of this type exist anywhere, yet since the term "matrilineage" is in current use to describe corporate groups of a matrilineal society in which the order of segmentation is known, I use this word to describe corporate groups of a matrilineal society in which the order of segmentation is known, I use this word to describe the taravad.

421 V The Traditional Kinship System

(1) The Property-Group

(a) The Corporate Character of the Group

A traditional property-group was a small segment of the lineage, usually comprising a group of brothers and sisters by the same mother, and the children and daughters' children of the sisters. This group was the joint property-owning unit: its members, male and female, were from birth equal copartners in the buildings, gardens, kanam and janmam lands, movables, ritual objects and serfs owned by the group. The group

421 was headed by its oldest male member (karanavan) who was the legal guardian of all members and represented them in the local subcaste assembly. When spoken of in its own right the property-group, like the lineage, was called a taravad; when spoken of as a segment of the lineage it was called a tavari (lit. - "mother's line"). Tavari could also be used of any intermediate segment of the lineage or of a minimal segment of one [54] mother and her children within the property-group had a separate garden name in addition to its lineage-name: each individual was called by his taravad-name, property-group name, personal name and caste-title (e.g., Kolangatt Thekkedil Govindan Nayar - "In the place of the bathing pool, the southern side, Govindan Nayar.")

421 592 Usually, a property-group owned only one house and was simultaneously a dwelling group. In wealthier desavari and naduvari lineages, however, a group which increased in size might build two or more adjacent houses. In some cases a minimal segment descended from one sister occupied each of these houses, and cooking was separate. Much more commonly, the two adjacent houses would be used indiscriminately by all members, cooking being carried on in only one.

592 342 A traditional house of the retainer or desavari subcastes comprises a central large building with two storeys, separate staircases for men and women, and in the centre of it a separate courtyard open to the sky. The house faces east and is fronted by a spacious verandah used

592 (except for cleaning) only by men of the group
342 and their male visitors. Within, a passage
leads to the central courtyard, round which
[352] rooms open off on two or three sides. These
include the ancestor-shrine of the group, several
store-rooms for clothing, vessels and
paddy (stored in carved wooden chests), one or
more bed- and [55] sitting-rooms each containing
a bedroll, bench, wooden stools and a rope
to hang clothes; and a small room used by women
during their delivery and menstrual seclusions.
Beyond the courtyard to the west is a
long narrow dining hall with a large kitchen behind
it, and behind this the back verandah occupied
only by servants, women and children.
Upstairs may be four or five empty bedrooms
in which women receive their visiting husbands.
Men born into the group seldom enter the upstairs'
rooms and may not use the women's
staircase.

[427] Outside in the courtyard a separate building
[887] may be devoted to storing paddy paid as rents
by the group's tenants. The upstairs of the
[343] building is often set aside for the karanavan's[1]
use; here he sleeps, is served with food by women
of the house, entertains his friends and
keeps records of the group's economic transactions.
If the group is large, a second separate
building is often reserved for junior men to
sleep, read and entertain friends when they are
593 not visiting their wives. In village headmen's
342 and chiefly property-groups whose women often
have Nambudiri husbands, a separate building
with its own kitchen, granary and Brahman

[1] [Eldest man of the property-group --- Analyst]

593 servants is set aside at the expense of the taravad
342 to entertain these men when they visit their
wives, sometimes for two or three days at a time.

351 The buildings and courtyard are surrounded
515 by a shady garden of coconut, jackfruit, cashew
[343] nut and mango trees. Chiefs and village headmen have a private bathing pool with stone steps running round it in their own garden; retainer [56] Nayars more often bathe in the large public bathing pools attached to the temples and reserved for "clean" castes of the village. Men and women bathe and swim daily in public clad in a loin-cloth, on opposite sides of the pool.
[526] Both boys and girls become excellent swimmers and divers almost as soon as they can walk.

351 In the southeast corner of the garden is an
[764] open space set aside as the group's cremation ground, while at another corner is a dense shrub-
[778] bery devoted to the snake-gods of the group, in which small stone images of cobras are set up.

421 The property-group was traditionally a cor-
592 porate group in other sense than those in which
672 this term applied to the lineage. Whereas the lineage was held responsible in cases of offence against religious law (sins, or crimes against the village community), the property-group was responsible in cases of debt or theft (torts). The headman, on behalf of the group, must make restitution for such offences from the group's jointly owned funds. In addition, as representative of the group in the assembly, he must pay annual dues to the temple funds. Through its headman, the group also acted as a single legal personality in the payment of wages to its

421 servants and serfs, of rents to the janmi, and
592 the receipt of rents from tenants. Today in law
672 as it was codified by the British the legal per-
sonality of the property-group is clearly recog-
nized: suits concerning property-disputes, for
example, are filed in the name of a property-
group and not of its karanavan as an individual.

592 (b) Ritual Observances of the Group

Besides having important legal functions, the
property-group was united in rites of various
kinds. Its members acted jointly as a host-
[561] group in inviting neighbouring groups of the vil-
lage to rites de passage such as name-giving
(28th day), first rice-feeding (6th month) and the
ceremonies associated with a death. At the tali-
[796] rite, the lineage as a whole held the ceremony in
its oldest house, but expenses were divided be-
tween the property-groups and food for the feasts
[764] cooked separately in their houses. Similarly at
a death, the whole lineage observed pollution
and attended the cremation, gathering of bones
and ashes on the 7th day, and purification and
feasting on the 15th day, but members of the
property-group, male and female, each made
offerings of cooked rice to the spirit in their
[765] courtyard each day during the pollution period.
The rites of chief mourner were performed by
the man considered most closely related to the
deceased - her eldest son in the case of a wo-
man, and the man next younger to him in the
property-group, in the case of a man,

592 The propitiation of snakes and of dead male
782 forbears also united the group's members. The

592 nagas or cobra-deities which were believed to
782 guard each group were housed in the snake-grove
in a corner of the garden and annually given
offerings of milk and eggs by the karanavan in
the presence of members. As well as warding
592 off ordinary sickness and misfortune they were
782 particularly [58] believed responsible for the
fertility or barrenness of taravad women. Special
offerings were made to them if a woman
failed to conceive, and a performance was held a
at which men and women of a low caste called
Pulluvar played instruments and sang songs to
[787] entice the snakes in the grove to appear. A
group of women of the taravad, after purifying
themselves by fasting and sex-continence for
several days previously, then became possessed
by the snake-gods (who are said to have "entered
into them") and performed a wild dance, bowing
and swaying in a circle and sweeping their hair
along the ground. In this condition they might
speak with the voice of the snakes and announce
what propitiations were necessary to appease
[158] them. Sometimes the ceremony ended with one
or more women falling into a fit. It seems
592 fairly certain that the snake-gods were (as so
786 commonly elsewhere) worshipped as phallic
symbols. Since they were definitely not regarded
as the spirits of dead matrilineal forbears,
but were capable of alternately withholding
fertility from taravad women or causing
them to conceive, it is a plausible guess that
they collectively symbolized the procreative
powers of past genitors of the property-group,
who had been so essential to its perpetuation yet

592 so firmly excluded from participation in its ev-
782 eryday affairs. If this were so we would have
[152] evidence that the Nayars, in spite of their extreme emphasis on the matrilineal line, virtual sexual promiscuity within the caste, and minimal recognition of paternity, had an Oedipus Complex [59] which caused men to fear and propitiate the phallic representatives of their fathers, and women to have fantasies about "possession" by paternal phallic symbols. Unfortunately snake worship is now practically extinct; I never saw it, and found present-day informants able to make few associations about it.

592 If the snake-gods were, at least unconsciously,
782 collective "fathers" of the taravad, it is inter-
831 esting that they were represented in an archaic, dream-like form as snakes (pure phallic animal symbols) robbed of their human attributes. This would accord with the fact that Oedipal hostility of the father, which must have been experienced by Nayar children since they slept, and do today, in the mother's room till age four or five and have opportunity to witness parental intercourse, would be repressed before latency and leave its mark only in unconscious phallic fantasies about the father which could be translated into the cultural idiom of beliefs about harmful snake-gods. Such archaic representations contrast with the less distorted ones of male forbears of the taravad.

592 These latter comprise only the spirits of dead
769 karanavans of the property-group, not of men
778 who died without attaining to headship, and very seldom of women. (5) In each house, a room

592 devoted to dead karanavans' spirits, opening off
769 the inner courtyard, contains a number of small
778 wooden stools on which the spirits are believed
to come and sit. In those branches of the taravad which have remained in situ for many generations, retaining [60] an old ancestral house while collateral segments hived off into new ones (6), the ancestor shrine contains many stools, placed in order and named with the names of the karanavans going back to the first of the segment or of the lineage as a whole. In newer houses built by segments which have recently left the parent house there may be only one or two, starting with the stool of the man who built the house and was its first karanavan.(7) Offerings of cooked good, with delicacies of the kind most enjoyed by the recipient during his lifetime, are made before each stool by the living karanavan, in the presence of all members, twice annually on the new moon days of April-
592 May and October-November. The spirits of
769 dead karanavans are thought of as vindictive and
152 fearsome, ever prone to take offence against
living members who fail in any of the details of ritual performances and general care of the taravad house and lands which are their duty, and to vent hostility on them out of all proportion to their offence. They are placated with fear and reverence but without affection. Their character contrasts with that of the patrilineal ancestral spirits of Tamil Brahmans, who are thought of as harmless, straving, lonely, pitiful beings who must be given food to sustain them in the life in the world of the dead. This

592 769 152 difference in the character of ancestral spirits probably relates to the fact that among Nayars, hostility to the mother's brother, the karanavan and all older men, though curbed by strict rules of etiquette and [61] social distance, is often either fully conscious or dealt with by projection: the mother's brother may be thought of as persecuting and his discipline strongly resented, though loyalty to the mother and the group prevents a man from openly venting his aggression. Among Brahmans, aggressive impulses against the father, elder brothers and other older men are deeply repressed; such older male figures are thought of a protective and nurturant, and inner opposition to them arouses much guilt. Perhaps because of this, their spirits are also harmless, and what is projected in beliefs about them is rather the individual's own oral dependency longings.

592 769 The propitiation only of heads of the property-groups, by the living head on behalf of all members, underlines the corporate character of the group. Brahmans instead propitiate each man his own line of recent patrilineal forbears - father, paternal grandfather and great-grandfather and their wives - thus emphasizing the strength of the asymmetrical interpersonal tie between father and son, at the expense of the solidarity of the patrilineal group. 592 602 Among Nayars, interpersonal relations between men of the matrilineal group are neither structurally strong nor emotionally intense: men are bound to the group and incidentally to each other by their primary ties to women (mother and sisters); rivalry between them is acute and they are kept

592 602 together only by loyalty to the group as a whole and a sense of pride in being able to submit to discipline from male elders for the sake of their natal kinswomen. A man may be extremely proud of his taravad and of his karanavan as a good manager and spokesman, but he has a less intimate personal relationship with him than does a patrilineal man with his father. In the Brahman patrilineal extended family, by contrast, individual interpersonal ties between father and son and between brothers, who form the core of the group, may be marked by deep devotion, while loyalty to the patrilineal lineage as a corporate unit, and its overall solidarity, are much weaker.

592 571 (c) The Splitting of Property-Groups

The property-groups of retainer Nayars divide at a particular point in their development. The Nayars themselves do not know this. They regard partition of the property-group as an unfortunate occurrence which takes place because of the greed or envy of individual men, or because of unwonted increase in the membership of the group. It is true that before the increase in population of the hundred years, individual property-groups must often have remained intact over many generations, simply reproducing their numbers. However, genealogies from the histories I collected of over thirty taravads show that retainer property-groups in fact partition with unfailing regularity at a particular point in their development. This occurs when the group contains two or more segments descended from sisters, whose maternal uncles and brothers are all dead, and when each segment has an adult son or [63] grandson old enough to become karanavan in his own right. Since the armies were disbanded and men came home to live on their estates (about 1810), it is probable that groups have partitioned slightly more quickly than they formerly did, for over the past hundred years men have considered themselves old enough to become karanavans of new groups (if their uncles and older brothers are all dead) by the age of 30 to 40, whereas they appear traditionally to have been still in the army until about the age of 50. But the structure of the group at its time of partition appears to have been the same at all periods until the most recent(discussed later.) Traditionally~~, as~~ long as the karanavan is own brother, mother's brother or mother's mother's brother to all members of the group, partition cannot take place, because men cannot separate from their mothers and sisters. A sibling group can never split into two, nor a junior man secede from his own mother's brother: the relationship between these men is an inter-personal one and they are within the same minimal segment of the lineage. Partition can take place only between men of different minimal segments (parallel cousins, a man and his classificatory mother's brother, etc.) who are no longer held together by common submission to a living karanavan of the parental or grandparental generation, and whose relationship is therefore structured in terms of the relationship between groups.

592 [64] Every woman is thus the potential founder
571 of a property-group, and often, after her brothers have in turn been karanavans and are dead, she lives to see her segment's property divided from that of her sisters, and her son or even daughter's son established as head of her group. However, some women do not of course become founders of groups, either because they have no children or because they have only daughters who themselves become founders in their own right when their sons are old enough. Again, a group of brothers with no sisters was traditionally unlikely to form a separate group, since they would have no women to perpetuate their group(or for that matter, to cook for them). They would be likely to remain volunatrily attached to a parallel segment, succeeding, along with their classificatory brothers, to karanavanship as they became in turn oldest member of the group. Alternatively they might split away and adopt one or more girls from collateral segments to perpetuate their separate group.

In all cases of partition, division of the property was stirpital: equal shares accrued to segments of the same order which were descended from sisters. The segment which contained the old karanavan at the time of partition usually retained the ancestral house.

592 (d) Kinship Relations within the Group

602 The karanavan was traditionally unequivocal
868 head of the group. He managed the property, built new houses, repaired the old, leased land from the janmi, and controlled [65] the labour

592 of serfs. He could command all other members,
602 male or female, and children were trained to
868 obey him with reverence. He[1] had the rights of
a pater over small children: till puberty he was
responsible for having them educated in Malaya-
lam reading and writing, must discipline them
like a father in patriliny, and might beat them
if they disobeyed. Even today in orthodox
[593] houses, the father of a child has no share at all
in the karanavan's rights of pater: he may not
interfere in education or discipline or question
the karanavan's right to dispose of a child's
career and services.

As their legal guardian, the karanavan must traditionally pass on to young men the martial traditions, swords and other weapons of the taravad. He must educate them also in the management of lands and serfs and the cultivation of gardens. Even today in villages, every Nayar has expert knowledge of paddy and garden cultivation and the planning of household architecture. Such information is learned with great care from the karanavan and younger brothers of the mother, all of whom play a part in the child's education after the age of four to five. In spite of interpersonal rivalry between men, Nayars show great loyalty to the group as a whole, pride in the military skill, dignity and financial integrity of their karanavans of past ages, and eagerness to identify with their mothers' brothers and eventually take their place as leaders of the property-group. This pride in the offices and public status of the group is of course most marked in royal lineages, [66] but

[1] [the Karanavan --- Analyst]

592 it occurs in subcastes as low as washermen,
602 funeral priests and barbers, among whom all
868 tasks are traditionally learnt from the mother's
brothers. The handing on of skills in the matrilineal
592 line goes along with the traditional belief
602 that men of a taravad resemble each other in
828 character, as indeed they often do. Some groups
are characterized as bold, and fearless in fighting;
others as cautious with money; others as
good arbitrators in disputes, friendly to all men;
[827] others as unusually intelligent. Individuals are
also expected to resemble their fathers (as well
as their mothers) physiologically, for the Nayars
are not ignorant of the male role in procreation;
but character, which they prize greatly,
is rightly thought to be transmitted from
men to their sisters' sons.

592 It seems probable that the karanavan's powers
602 were limited by the codification of law which
671 came about during British rule. It is not certain
whether he could traditionally alienate land
without the consent of other adults of the group.
During British rule he could not. British law
also permitted appeal to the court by junior
members for the removal of a karanavan who
could be shown guilty of gross mismanagement.
He could then be set aside on a pension in favour
of the next younger man. An inefficient karanavan
could moreover be forced by court order to
maintain accounts of his income and expenditure;
since 1933 in Malabar District and 1938 in Cochin
all karanavans are legally obliged to do this and
to make available their accounts for inspection
by junior members [67] once a year. However,

592 602 671 few juniors avail themselves of this right, which is evidently repugnant to the traditional ideals of obedience and trust towards elders of the taravad.

592 602 695 421 Even traditionally, however, both junior men and women were often consulted in the management of property. If a dispute arose between segments within the group, it was common for appeal to be made to an arbitrator outside the lineage, and a settlement reached and embodied in a document called a karar, which legally bound all adult members. Such a settlement was likely in the case of a very old karanavan who decided to retire in favour of the second man. In a wealthy taravad he might then by common consent be allotted a small house and pension for the duration of his life. In desavari and naduvari taravads, karars were sometimes made to allot separate houses with lands for the maintenance of each of the old women of the group (often the karanavan's own sisters) to live on with their children and grandchildren. All lands continued to be managed by the karanavan, but he paid a sum of paddy from her allotted lands each year to the senior woman of each segment. If one sibling group in a taravad contained only brothers, a karar was sometimes made to allot to them a separate house with lands for the duration of their lives; this then reverted to the group as a whole after their deaths. Karars are however common only in village headmen's, chiefly or royal taravads: too little property is usually involved in the taravads of retainer Nayars.
592 602 Here effective management is commonly divided

592 between the karanavan and the oldest woman. 602 The former carries out all economic transactions outside the group and controls the total income; he also keeps the key of the outer granary in the courtyard. The latter plans cookery, keeps the keys of paddy chests within the house, organized the work of women and presents to the karanavan her requirements for day-to-day expenditures. (8) Particularly when the karanavan is the son or own younger brother of the oldest woman, management runs smoothly and the oldest woman may be de facto head of the group. If she is a younger sister or classificatory sister a more formal division of roles is common.

[601] Under the karanavan, men of the group are ranked by seniority. All those older than ego are sometimes collectively called karanavar and are accorded respect and obedience (within the limits set by overall obedience to the head) all younger, whether they be mother's brothers, younger brothers, maternal nephews or great nephews, may be commanded and disciplined. The social distance between men of a property-group is great, far greater than between father and son, or between brothers, in any patrilineal South Indian group. Indeed, though learning and skills are passed on between them, the relationships between men are, when possible, formalized to the point of avoidance. By traditional etiquette, a man may not touch his karanavan or any maternal uncle; before approaching him he must remove his upper cloth. To speak to the karanavan he stands respectfully half hidden

592 from sight behind a pillar, holding his hand before
602 his mouth lest his breath should reach the
hearer. [69] With younger mother's brothers
more intimately responsible for his education,
a youth's etiquette is necessarily relaxed, but
he observes the greatest possible formal respect
before them. A similar etiquette is preserved
before older brothers and classificatory
brothers: after puberty these never joke, sit or
chew betal and areca nuts together. A junior
man never sits before his senior except at
mealtimes when all men may sit in the dining
hall in order of age, served by women of the
group who eat later in company in the kitchen.
In general, age overrides generation and also
segment in the formal structuring of relationships
between men of a property-group: mother's
mother's brother is accorded the same etiquette
as mother's brother, and classificatory
older brother as older brother. Emotionally,
however, there tends to be less acrimony and
more tenderness, as might be expected, between
alternate than between proximal generations;
there is also a strong tendency for own siblings
to support each other against classificatory siblings.
613 This is part of the process of clear-cut
593 segmentation in the lineage along lines descending
through sisters: it culminates regularly in
quarrels between classificatory brothers and
division of property between the segments.
This process of segmentation throughout the
whole lineage derives from the paramount
strength of the mother-child bond, the key-pin
of the kinship system. For both men and women,

613 no other personal relationship can override this:
593 both sexes have their permanent home with the mother throughout her life and accord her unfailing [70] reverence and affection. From this bond issues the unity of the sibling group, (9) particularly the strong tie between brother and sister which emotionally reflects the dependence of men on their mothers. With the elder sister as with the mother a man has an intimate relationship of reverence mingled with easy familiarity: the two may sit together and discuss affairs of their kin-group, and the sister early accords her brother the right to discipline her children. With her elder brother, as with her maternal uncle, after her puberty, a woman must maintain a formal etiquette of partial avoidance: she may not sit before him speak to him unasked, or be alone in a room or a house with him. Only if she gravely offends against traditional morality, he may traditionally beat her even after puberty, for a Nayar woman owes the same obedience to all older matrilineal kinsmen as a collectivity as does a woman of the patrilineal castes to her father and later her
[684] husband. Incest with the younger sister or classificatory sister or sister's daughter is a most heinous crime, formerly punishable by death, and in modern times by total ostracism by the caste and lineage. It does however occasionally take place and is evidently recognized as a temptation under matrilocal residence, hence the formal etiquette imposed to counter it.

592 In a traditional taravad, therefore, women form the core of the group: men stand on the

592 periphrey, though the legal power is in their hands. They are bound to it by their interpersonal ties with their mothers and sisters, [71] hence the formal etiquette imposed to counter it.

In a traditional taravad, therefore, women form the core of the group: men stand on the periphery, though the legal power is in their hands. They are bound to it by their interpersonal ties with their mothers and sisters, but to some extent drawn away from it by their mutual rivalries and by their sexual liaisons with women in other lineages. The bonds between a woman and her daughters, as between sisters, are much more intense and less rivalrous than are those between men of the group. Residential separation, between a woman and her daughters, even for visits of more than a day or two, is traditionally unthinkable, and sisters even today often stay together until torn apart by the rivalries of their respective children. Cooking is communal in a taravad: the mother or oldest woman arranges the division of female labour. Apart from clothing (freely borrowed between women), property, even jewelry, is communally owned. Though a general respect is owed to all older women, the etiquette of behavior between them is easy and informal. In the house, the small group of one woman and her children receives little spatial recognition. In the daytime, all work and play together in the kitchen, upstairs rooms and back verandah; at night, older children sleep with their grandmothers in the main hall, while young ones go

592 [582] with their parents into any convenient vacant room. At the same time, the separate, unique role of each woman as potential founder of a new taravad is recognized in certain rules: both sororate and sororal polygymy are traditionally forbidden, for example, since the inter-personal unity between sisters, as well as their separate positions each at the head of a line of matrilineal descendants, must not be endangered or distorted by their extra-lineage ties.

592 581 [72] (2) The Traditional Institution of Marriage. Consistent with the unity and multiplex economic, legal and ceremonial functions of the taravad as a corporate group, marriage was traditionally the slenderest of ties, while as a social concept fatherhood scarcely existed. We
592 582 608 have mentioned already that at the tali-rite of retainer, middle class and servant Nayars and of temple servants, the immature girls of a lineage were collectively "married" and divorced before puberty by their local caste group as a whole, represented by their individual enangar. In desavari, chiefly and royal lineages the tali was usually tied by a man of a higher sub-caste from which the lineage was wont to draw lovers for its women in hypergamous liaisons. The women of desavari lineages were thus usually "married" by naduvari men, naduvari and royal women either by Nambudiri men or by men of some higher-ranking royal lineage more ancient than their own. In all castes, the tali-tier had no subsequent responsibilities and if he wished need never visit the woman again.

592 His relationship was however remembered, and
582 he was regarded as the ritual father (appan) of
608 the woman's children, in contrast to their genitor
or to the step-father who happened currently
to be visiting a woman, these latter both being
608 called acchan. Ritual fatherhood meant nothing
764 at all except that at the death of the tali-tier,
602 the woman and all her children must observe
death pollution. Death pollution was otherwise observed only for matrilineal kin; it was not until recently observed for the genitor or other lovers of the mother. Its observance for the tali-tier shows that even the Nayars, with their extreme emphasis on the matrilineal line and total exclusion of the husband and father from economic, legal or ceremonial rights, recognized the field of kinship to extend beyond the unilineal descent-group, and felt the need to give ceremonial recognition [73] to the concepts of marriage and of paternity, even though they gave none to the individual husband and father.

595 After the tali-rite and shortly before or after
833 puberty, a girl might enter into a number of
unions with men of her own subcaste (including, if both wished, the ritual husband of the tali-rite) or of an appropriate higher subcaste. Similarly, a man might cohabit with any number of mistresses from his own or an appropriate lower subcaste. A man usually visited a mistress after supper, and left before breakfast; even today in orthodox matrilocal households men eat with their sisters and mothers and visit or accept food in the conjugal house in the daytime only on special invitation from the wife's karanavan.

595 833 Traditionally, the visiting lover placed his weapons outside the door as a warning to other men that he was within. My informants reported that more recently, until the end of the nineteenth century in some villages, if two lovers of a woman called on the same night the one who came last slept outside on the verandah. Usually the regular lovers of a woman (who might not be from the same lineage) knew each other and informally agreed upon their turns.

595 It is difficult to decide from the evidence whether this instution of combined polyandrous and polygynous mating can strictly be regarded as "marriage" in any usual sense of the term. Personally, I prefer the word "marriage" for the ritual marriage of talikettukalyanam (which old English speaking Nayars even today state to have been "the real marriage"), because it gave ceremonial recognition, to a stable relationship of perpetual hereditary affinal kinship between lineages in the local group. Moreover, although exclusive sexual rights in the woman were given up at once at the "divorce", the observance of death [74] pollution by the woman and her children indicates that in some sense the relationship was thought to continue for life.

595 684 851 However, the evidence suggests that post-puberty liaisons too were perhaps not entirely promiscuous; moreover, the more permanent of them at all events were attended by ceremonial obligations. First, liaisons were strictly limited to men of the appropriate "good" castes: sex unions with men of lower caste were categorically forbidden and for women, punishable

595 684 651 by immediate death. For this reason it was necessary, when a woman became pregnant, for her to be able to name one or more lovers of appropriate subcaste who might have fathered the child. These men must then acknowledge their responsibility by paying the expenses of delivery (petta chilavu - clothing, rice and vegetables) to the barber-midwife who attended at births. If no appropriate lover came forward to do so, the woman was deemed to have cohabited with a low caste man and was excommunicated. Even today, a girl who becomes pregnant before the (modern) marriage ceremony is easily exculpated if she can name a Nayar or higher caste lover who will pay her deliver expenses. She is then by old custom tacitly regarded as having been married to him, and if he chooses not to visit her again, has little difficulty in finding a second husband. If however no expenses are paid, she is assumed to have had relations with a low caste man, a Christian or a Muslim, and though excommunication is not now effectual, she falls into social disgrace. She is unlikely henceforth to find a Nayar husband, and her household may find difficulty in marrying away other girls of her generation

595 586 In addition to the delivery expenses, a Nayar of the local subcaste group who entered into a relationship with a girl was expected to present her with a loincloth on the first night of visiting her. Thereafter, if he continued to visit her, he must make customary gifts of clothing, [75] bathing- and hair-oil, and vegetables, at Onam, Vishu and Tiruvadhira, (10) the three main

festivals of the year. If he failed to do so on one of these occasions, it was a tacit sign that he had ended the relationship. However, it seems clear from the literature that though a woman might have a small number of regular visitors of her local group - or even only one - these had no exclusive sexual rights, and that she might receive others at will if they were passing through her village. The evidence in uncertain, however, about the total number of men a woman might entertain concurrently. Nicolo di Conti (1444) writes that "The Nayar women are allowed to take several husbands, so that some have ten or more". Varthema (1510), writes that "One woman has five, six or seven husbands, or even eight. And one sleeps with her one night and one another night" (p. 146). These reports suggest that the number of lovers a woman might have was limited. Hamilton states that in the eighteenth century this was definitely so, and that a woman might have "twelve but no more at one time." (p. 310) Barbosa, however, writing in 1520, says that "in addition to the three or four lovers whom every woman has, they never refuse themselves to any Brahmene or Nayre who gives them money." His view is supported by Pietro della Valle (1624), who says "The Gentile Nairi have no peculiar wives, but all women are common amongst them" (II, p. 379). It seems probable, therefore, that each woman had a small number of fairly regular lovers who made ceremonial gifts to her at the festivals, but that a man might without difficulty gain access to a strange woman when he was

595 away from his village on military service. Buchanan, as late as 1807, reports that Nayar women vied with each other as to the number of lovers they could obtain. (p. 411).

595 584 644 [76] Until late in the nineteenth century, women evidently had freedom to choose their own lovers. This was until recently still the case in the royal lineages, where women selected their lovers from a small group of aristocratic Nambudiri families. Young men of these families were introduced into the palaces by older kinsmen already established there, and might become ensconced as regular occupants of the Nambudiri quarters until such time as they were dismissed by their royal mistresses. The princes of the lineage appear to have had little say in arranging these unions. I was told by one informant that the senior Raja periodically held an audience at which Nambudiris currently living in the palace were presented to him by his secretaries, but that otherwise he had little knowledge of marital life within the palace. 595 584 Today, as also in commoner lineages, this is no longer the case: monogamy has been customary in all subcastes for the past forty to fifty years, and the prospective husband of a woman is selected by her karanavan or elder brother. In orthodox families of the retainer subcastes, at least for the past fifty years, the karanavan or the elder brother of a woman has had the right to dismiss a husband of whom he disapproved. Alternatively [586] a woman may still, as of old, divorce her husband at will by refusing him admittance or causing her kinsmen to place his sleeping mat

584 outside on the verandah before he comes to visit
595 her.

These statements however again require some modification in the case of hypergamous unions. In recent years at all events, a powerful Nambudiri or royal landowner might occasionally force his attentions on a Nayar woman, whose family would be unlikely to oppose him. In two cases I even heard of Nambudiris who had succeeded in carrying on a liaison with a dead Nayar wife's younger sister, though this is contrary to Nayar rules of mating and led to unhappiness and strong covert [77] disapproval among the woman's kinsmen. In general, however, the traditional picture of Nayar marriage is one in which women voluntarily seek the favours of men: rape, for example, is a crime
[684] apparently unheard of among them. Certainly, cases are recorded of the dismissal of a higher caste man by a Nayar woman.

613 Combined polyandrous and polygynous mating
595 had a function in maintaining the unity of the
592 lineage. It seems that in every matrilineal system one basic conflict is inherent, namely the conflict between a man's ties to his natal kin on the one hand and to his kin by marriage and procreation on the other. In the Nayar system in this area, the conflict was resolved by almost completely eliminating the claims of the father and his kin. Polyandry and polygyny, combined, minimized the rights of the husband and father, and dispersed their roles between a number of men. This preserved the unity of the lineage, by preventing the close attachment of men to

613 their children in other lineages. The separation
592 of the ritual marriage (the tali-rite) from
595 actual cohabitation (sambandham, initiated without
religious rites) underlined the necessity to
the lineage of marriage and procreation, and
the exclusion of the individual husband and father
from a legally and socially significant role
in relation to it.

594 It is clear therefore that whatever name we
592 give to the traditional marital relationship
566 among Nayars, the elementary family, contrary
to the view of Murdock (11), did not exist as an
economic, legal or ceremonial unit among them.
This circumstance, which is perhaps unique in
the world, was evidently made possible by their
specialized role as one caste group in a larger
society in which, in general, marriage and the
elementary family were institutionalized. First,
the Nayar system could probably not have come
about in any but a leisure class supported by
the labour of tenants and serfs. Because of
this, young Nayar men need give economic [78]
support neither to their wives nor to their sisters.
Women were the people who sat at home
on the land; their maintenance was assured by
the payment of rents from low caste tenants
and the labour of serfs, and it was necessary to
have only one old man living with them to manage
701 their financial affairs. The feudal relationships
595 of the caste system thus freed all able-bodied
men for their occupation as a mobile militia.
In explaining their peculiar marriage relationships,
I am inclined to emphasize the military
organization even more than the status of Nayars

595
701

as a leisure class, since leisure classes without polyandry are common all over India.

The Nayars themselves appear to have recognized a connection between their occupation as a militia and the custom of plural marriages by which men were prevented from forming permanent attachments to wife and children. Barbosa, writing of plural marriages, reports that "it is said that the kings made this law, in order that the Nayars should not be covetous and should not abandon the king's service" (p. 124). Similarly Joao de Barros, writing in the early sixteenth century, says: "They say that this (polyandry) is a very ancient law among them, and that it springs from the wish of a certain prince to relieve the men of the burden of maintaining sons, and leave them ready for warlike service to which they are bound whensoever the king calls upon them." (12)

Nayar marriage may thus perhaps be seen as comparable to other military institutions, for example the age sets of bachelors among the Masai (Merker, 1904, pp. 82-3) or the age regiments of the Zulus (Bryant, 1929, pp. 124, 642-7) in the reign of Shaka. In both these societies those groups of the population organized for warfare were prevented from forming attachments to wives and children. Shaka achieved this among the Zulus by compelling men of the age regiments [79] under 35 to 40 to remain (at least in theory) celibate. Among the Masai, a soldier might form as many connections as he wished, and promiscuous intercourse was encouraged between men of the bachelor age sets

595 701 and girls of suitable age. But only older men were permitted to marry and form a household with their wives and children.

The similarity between systems like the Masai and the Nayar system is that in those groups of the population organized for warfare, male sexuality was divorced from the upbringing of children, which among Nayars took place within the lineage and concerned only lineage members. Among the Masai this freeing of a man's sexual life from the responsibilities of child-rearing concerned only certain age-groups of men, while in Calicut and Cochin it applied to the total male population of one caste.

595 701 566 184 The extent to which Nayar kinship was influenced by their relation to the land and by the military organization becomes clearer when we compare the kinship system in Calicut and Cochin with that of Nayars in the northern kingdoms of Kolattunad, Kottayam and Kadattunad, north of the Kora River which formed the northern boundary of the Calicut kingdom at the height of the Zamorin's power.

Apart from the narrow coastal belt, the country in north Malabar was rocky and mountainous, and comprised much waste land and virgin forest. Perhaps because of this, the sparsely populated northern kingdom never achieved the degree of political centralization found in the central kingdom. Government was ostensibly by nadavaris owing a tenuous allegiance to their Rajas. In fact, however, in all these kingdoms chiefs perpetually rebelled against their Raja and shook off his power for long periods, while

595 within the chiefdom political control over and
701 within villages was insufficient and feuds were
566 common between adjacent villages and between
184 individual lineages. The Nayars were not organized as a permanent militia of retainers, but merely fought occasionally on [80] behalf of a local chief. Apart from small subcastes of servants round the palaces, they formed an independent caste of cultivators owning their own land and lacking the overlordship of Nambudiri Brahmans and the service of agricultural serfs. Consistent with the absence of a permanent military organization, we find that in the North, Nayar men themselves managed the cultivation of their estates and sometimes actually worked the land, and that here residence was traditionally avunculocal, and polyandry unknown.

835 (3) Traditional Incest Prohibitions and Prefer-
582 ential Marriages

The traditional incest prohibitions were simple. In all castes of Malabar, prohibitions on sex-relations between kin coincide with prohibitions on marriage; this in any case would obviously be so among Nayars who did not distinguish the two and had no concept of adultery. Sex relations were strictly prohibited within the lineage: infringement of this rule was traditionally punishable by death, and during British rule with excommunication. Relations were also prohibited between a woman and two men of the same property-group, as between a man and two women of the same property-group. Sororal polygyny and fraternal polyandry, as well

Sororal polygyny and fraternal polyandry, as well
582 as marriage to the dead spouse's sibling, were
595 thus automatically forbidden. This rule appears
835 to relate to the paramount need to keep minimal the potential rivalries between individuals of the same sex within the group. It was also consistent with the relationship of respect between
585 them. Even today, when ceremonies mark the
602 start of the post-puberty marriage, a man's
595 lineage elders may not attend his marriage ceremonies and feast. He goes to the bride's house with unrelated friends of his own age or with affines, ideally, his sister's husbands. For marriage is a jolly undertaking and only such men may joke together about sexual scandals in the village. But [81] reticence is required in discussing their own marriage, and the respect a woman owes her older kinswomen demands that she interfere in no way in their marital life. Today, a woman treats her father or step-father with affectionate respect of a less formal kind than that accorded to the mother's brother, but she should not touch him after puberty. With her elder sister's husband she observes still greater formality, based on the incest prohibition. The ban on sororal polygyny is particularly comprehensible in view of the fact that Nayar women were traditionally open rivals for the attentions of men: many writers mention this and it is still discernible in villages today. The mutual respect and amity required of women of the same property-group was incompatible with such rivalry.

835 However, the ban on relations with two persons
582 of the same group was less stringent than the

835 rule of lineage exogamy. Even today, cases
582 occur very occasionally in which a man cohabits
both with his wife and with their daughter by the
marriage, or with his wife and her younger sister.
Such affairs are viewed with disgust as
evidence of extreme ill-breeding, but they do
not merit excommunication or exclusion from
public ceremonies. This appears to be because,
[611] traditionally, only matrilineal kinsfolk are regarded
as kin in the true sense of the word: incest
prohibitions outside this range are a matter
of propriety rather than of religious law.

582 No other unions outside the lineage and within the appropriate caste appear traditionally to have been prohibited. Relations with the father's sister (or rather with the sister of the mother's lover, since paternity was often uncertain) were disfavoured because of generation difference but even today they are not prohibited. Unions were definitely permissible between the Nambudiri son and the Nayar daughter of a Nambudiri eldest son (i.e., between paternal step-siblings); it is [82] not certain whether they were ever permitted between two Nayars known to be paternal step-siblings, but they are not permitted today. Marriage to the brother's daughter and the paternal parallel cousin are still permitted, though they are not preferential marriages between Nayars. Marriage is however preferential between a Nambudiri and his paternal parallel cousin of a matrilineal caste. This is particularly true of unions between aristocratic Nambudiris and royal women, since it perpetuates a bond between two groups both of which are small and highly

582 specialized in wealth and power. This is the only case I know of in South India of preferential marriage to the paternal parallel cousin: it is a function of the unique hypergamous relationship between patrilineal and matrilineal castes.

Incest prohibitions were therefore in full harmony with the Nayar emphasis on the unity and exclusiveness of the matrilineage and their minimal recognition of marital and patrilineal ties.

582 Today, cross cousin marriage is much fav-
602 ored and serves to harmonize the modern conflicting claims of a man's natal and his conjugal kin. It has been common for at least a hundred years since polyandry began to die out. It was certainly of course permissible in the traditional system and must often have occurred, since enangar are often cross cousins and unions between enangar of the local group were presumably the most numerous and most stable. A likely guess is that a preference for unions between cross cousins, when these were known, traditionally existed alongside plural marriages, though the two seem at first sight mutually opposed. For these institutions (cross cousin marriage and very weak plural marriages) are both functions of the unity of the lineage. They are opposite, but alternative, methods of dealing with the "matrilineal puzzle". (13) When matrilineal bonds are of para-[83]mount strength as they were among the Nayars, a weak and transient conjugal tie is likely, because natal and conjugal ties inevitably oppose each other. Plural liaisons with frequent separation cater for matrilineal bonds by minimizing conjugal

582 ties, and these were traditionally the common
602 solution in this area. But even in a promiscuous community, it seems likely that the effective relationship between a man and children he believes to be his cannot always be altogether overridden and may assert itself in face of matrilineal ties. When this happens some other solution to the conflict is required. Cross cousin marriage, particularly matrilateral, (14) is one such partial solution, since it harmonizes for two members and for two generations of a lineage conjugal interests which would otherwise be opposed.

601 (4) Kinship Terms

As might be expected, the traditional Nayar terminology of this area includes terms only for matrilineal kin, their spouse, and the children of ego's wife. Today, terms are sometimes used to address cognates, but they are very seldom used in reference; descriptive terms like "my father's nephew" and my mother's father" are used instead. Contrary to the view of Murdock and Emeneau, (15) the Nayars of this area do not have a bifurcate merging system with Iroquois cousin terms: indeed none of the matrilineal groups of Kerala (North Malabar Nayars, Tiyyars and Muslims, South Malabar and Cochin Nayars, or Travancore Iravas and Nayars) have such a system, which in this region is confined to the patrilineal and double unilineal castes below Nayars.

Within the lineage, men of the first and second ascending generations are equated as "male

601 mothers" (ammaman), occasionally with prefixes "big" or "small" in the first ascending, according to age in relation to mother, and occasionally with prefixes "big oldest" and"small oldest" in the second [84] ascending, according to age in relation to grandmother. This equating of first and second generation males accords with the disciplinary powers of all older males, headed by the karanavan. Correspondingly, sister's children and sister's daughter's children are all marumakan (m.) or marumakal (f.). In ego's generation (m. and f. sp.) older brothers are addressed and referred to as jyeshtan (coll. etan); younger brothers are referred to as anujan. All men older than ego in the lineage may be referred to as karanavar (seniors); all younger as anandravar (juniors). These usages accord with the great importance of age-rank between men. For both sexes, all senior kin are addressed by terms, all juniors by name.

Women of the second ascending generation are called muthasshi ("oldest woman") with prefixes "big" or "small" according to age in relation to grandmother. In the first ascending, similarly, mother - amma, and other women are "big" or "small" mothers. In ego's generation older sisters are jyeshtathi (m. and f. sp.), younger
601 sisters anujathi (m. and f. sp.). In addition,
593 there are special cross-sex reference terms for "male sibling" (f. sp., age unspecified) - angala, and "female sibling" (m. sp., age unspecified) - pengal. These bring out the importance for Nayars of the complementary brother-sister tie,

601 [593] on which the unity of the sibling group and the collateral cohesion of the lineage is based.

Among female affines, the wives of men of the second and first ascending generations are ammayi (fem. of ammaman). Today, great respect is shown to these women, but they are also proverbially disliked since it is expected that they will try to obtain favours from the maternal uncles and draw away their allegiance from the Similar attitudes are shown to the EBW who has the respectful term jyeshtathi amma - "elder-sister-mother" or respected elder sister". [85] Only descriptive terms are used for the spouses of younger brothers and maternal nephews.

Among male affines, the father and step-father are called by the respectful term acchan (lit. -"lord"). Higher caste fathers are also called by their caste titles (e.g. "acchan Nambudiri"). The mother's father is muthacchan (oldest "lord"). The term acchan, like jyeshtan, anujan, jyeshtathi, anujathi, bharya=wife and barthavu=husband, are all Sanskrit terms,evidently at some time taken over from Nambudiris. The old Tamil word appan=father was reserved for the mother's tali-tier and is seldom heard today among Nayars, though it is the usual word for "father" among Nambudiris themselves and in the lower castes. Acchan was also a lineage-title accorded to some desavaris and military leaders in the traditional period; it has the connotation of high rank and political office rather than of begetting, and seems particularly appropriate for the Nayar practice of hypergamy and the fact that their lineages tended, at least in

601 part, to be (literally) "fathered" by their feudal lords. All current lovers of the mother were traditionally called acchan, and the word is sometimes extended as an address-term to husbands of the mother's sisters (with age-prefixes) though these are usually referred to descriptively. In ego's generation, women have no reference-terms for the sisters' husbands: the older sister's husband is called jyeshtan or etan - "elder brother"; the younger sister's husband by his name and caste-title if older than ego, by name alone if younger. A man addresses his sister's husbands in the same way, but brothers-in-law also have a reciprocal reference-term, aliyan, which, like the cross-sex sibling terms, is usually restricted to men married into the property-group and not to the lineage as a whole. Its existence as a special term again points up the unique tie between brother and sister and the fact that brother and (traditionally visiting) [86] husband are brought into a special relationship through their claims on the same woman. Their etiquette, in contrast to that between lineage men, is one of easy familiarity, though covert jealousy between them is often intense.

Women address lineage kinsfolk older than themselves as do men. Their children they call makan (m.) and makal (f.), their daughters' children, irrespective of sex perakutti="name-child". This is appropriate for the daughter's daughter who is often called after a woman, but less so for the grandson who is usually named after some male forbear of his property-group, living or dead. These terms for descending

601 generations are extended throughout the lineage. Today men also use the same term for their own and step-children and own and step-grandchildren but do not extend them to other descendants of the wife's lineage or to the brothers' descendants. The words makan and makal are so regularly used by men today both for their own and step-children and in descriptive compound terms (e.g. "my uncle's son" - ende ammamande makan) that I think they were even traditionally used by men for children of their mistresses. Nambudiris, however, should properly use the terms only for their own or their elder brother's Nambudiri children.

Today in the modern bilateral kinship system which is gradually coming about, terms formerly restricted to matrilineal kin are sometimes used to address the father's matrilineal kin, though this usage is not yet standardized. Such terms now reflect the equivalence (rather than the opposition) of the sexes in marriage and of their groups, as would be expected in a bilateral system. Those in fairly current use are FF (=MF), FM (=MM), FMB (=MMB), FMBW (=MMBW, FB (=MB), FBW (=MBW), and FSi (=MSi). Cross cousins and paternal parallel cousins [87] have no reference-terms, but if older are addressed as siblings. A woman addresses her husband's kin by the same terms as the husband, unless she has married her maternal uncle's son, when she still calls her parents-in-law "MB" and "MBW". Both sexes however refer to their spouses' kin by descriptive compound terms, except for "brother-in-law"

601 (m. sp.). Except in a few "modern" marriages men do not address the wife's kin by terms, but instead use the name and caste title: many informants said they would not use terms for the wife's kinsfolk because they did not feel that they were kin - a traditional attitude. The main modern change therefore is the extension of primarily matrilineal terms to parallel kin of the father's matrilineal terms to parallel kin of the father's matrilineal group and their spouses. As it stands today, the terminological system thus faithfully reflects an extreme matrilineal system which has recently shifted towards bilaterality. [88]

613

VI. The Structure of the Royal Lineages

644 We saw that the traditional property-group of 423 retainer Nayars divided into segments when male members of the mother's generation were all dead, and that correspondingly the lineages of retainer Nayars went through a gradual process of fission between their major segments every [427] few generations. This state of affairs was in harmony with the relatively temporary relationship of retainer Nayars to the land, as kanam tenants, since kanam tenure permitted segments of a tarayas to hive off at intervals with ease.

This was not the case with the property-groups of royal and naduvari lineages, which were held together for longer periods by their joint ownership of extensive jenmam lands and by their political offices. These royal and chiefly taravads in most cases developed a somewhat different structure which enabled them to cohere for

613 longer periods.

644 In all the royal and chiefly lineages, political
423' office was normally held by the eldest member irrespective of branch. In several of these lineages, however, including Calicult, Walluvanad and Kolattiri, there existed also separate offices subordinate to that of the kind. In Calicut, the five oldest men of the Zamorin's lineage, irrespective of branch, held five offices or sthanams (occupant = sthani), each with a landed estate, separately from the lands jointly owned by each property-group of the lineage. The eldest sthani was the Zamorin who ruled at Calicut. The second was called Eralpad: he was the naduvari of Ernad, the oldest of the Zamorin's nads, from which his forbears originally sprang. To prevent rivalry with the [89] king, the second sthani was forbidden during his tenure of office to cross over into the Calicut nad until the Zamorin died and he was summoned to perform the funeral rites and receive the crown. The third sthani, the Munalpac, was commander-in-chief of the Zamorin's army: his estate was in Calicut but he travelled throughout the kingdom. The two youngest sthanis held no political office but lived as desavaris or independent landlords in separate villages of the kingdom. When the Zamorin or any of the other sthanis died, those below him in rank moved up one place, and the next eldest man was appointed as the fifth sthani.

From the 14th century until 1792, the Zamorin's lineage was able to cohere as a single property-group without partition between its

613 segments lifted out of their group on to separate
644 estates. The jointly owned land of the royal lin-
423 eage, in Ernaq, was managed by the sixth man
karanavan after the fashion of an ordinary Na-
[701] yar property-group. As among Nayars, younger men of the lineage were trained as soldiers and fought in the Raja's wars.

However, it also happened that during these centuries, the Zamorin's lineage did not greatly increase in numbers. Indeed, in the 18th century it was obliged to save itself from extinction by adopting three girls from the royal lineage of Nileswaram in South Canara, north of Kerala. In 1792, the Zamorin was conquered by the British and, along with other rulers of what became Malabar District, retired from political office as the head of a large landowning lineage. The British to compensate the royal lineages gave them political pensions, payable in cash sums annually to each male and female. Shortly afterwards, the Zamorin's [90] lineage began to increase in size, and by the mid-nineteenth century had partitioned into three property-groups, Pudiya (New) Tavari which lives in a village in the modern Calicut division of Malabar District, Padinyare (West) Tavari, also in Calicut, and Kirakke (East) Tavari in Ernad Division. Pudiya Tavari has this century partitioned into three new property-groups. The extensive lands of each group are managed by their separate karanavans. The five sthanams with their landed estates are still occupied by the five eldest members of the lineage, who in addition receive their political pensions independently of the rest.

613 The whole exogamous lineage now has over 300
644 members. This growth in numbers in the Brit-
423 ish period is part of the general increase in population all over Kerala; it is paralleled in many other royal and commoner lineages.

613 Within each property-group of the Zamorin's
644 lineage, residential and economic arrangements
593 differ somewhat from those of retainers. We may take as an example Kirakke tavari in Ernad division. This property-group contains 172 members and is the largest of the property-groups. It has a time-depth of eight genera-
tions. Most of the members live in a single
[344] kovilagam (palace) in Kottakkal village. The palace is a vast block of buildings with a fort at each corner and is surrounded by a moat. Within its precincts are, apart from the residential buildings, a temple, an elementary school and a high school for children of the lineage and the Nayar children of princes, and four bathing pools. The palace has a central kitchen where food is cooked for all members, and two main wings to house men and women [91] respectively. There is separate accommodation for the Nambudiri Brahman husbands of the women, who live uxorilocally at the expense of the palace. Each prince, and each princess with her small children, has a separate suite of two rooms. Children remain with their mothers in the women's quarters until the age of 15 when the boys move into separate rooms in the men's quarters and are prohibited from visiting the women. Brother-sister avoidance is strict. If a man wishes to speak to his mother or an

613 elder sister or classificatory sister he must
644 send a messenger to call her into the common
593 hall. After the age of 15 he may not speak to a younger sister or classificatory sister, and may see them only in the distance. Contact between children and their Nambudiri fathers, as between princes and their Nambudiri brothers-in-law, is also restricted: the Nambudiris live and eat separately from the princes, served by their own Brahman servants. It is obvious that such restrictions on social relations within the palace militate against affinal and intertavari quarrels, as well as against incest.

613 On all four sides of the palace are roads lead-
644 ing into the village. This is crowded with the
361 houses of Nayar retainers, each one of which
427 is in some way connected with the palace, and leases kanam lands from it. Many dwelling-groups are those of the princes' Nayar wives and children, chiefly of the Pariccha Menon subcaste; their forbears formed the private army of the Zamorin in traditional times. Other somewhat poorer households belong to the Agattu Charna and Pallichan subcastes; both men and women work in the place, since each adult member living in it employs two Nayar servants of his or her own sex to do housework and act as messengers. The servants are still paid daily in rice.

613 [92] The lands of the kovilagam are held in the
644 name of the eldest woman, but are managed by
423 the karanavan who also receives and distributes the pensions of his group in amounts which differ according to age-rank in the group. This

613 is a recent practice which grew out of the de-
644 mands for separate payments of those princes
423 who had left the palace to find modern work outside. Until about ten years ago, the karanavan completely controlled the group's finances and paid maintenance in kind to its members, even to toilet requisites such as oil for bathing and ash for cleaning the teeth. Since they began to receive allowances in cash, several princes have acquired private land and built small houses for their wives and children, where a very few of them now live and eat, despite caste rules against interdining with lower caste kinsfolk. In addition some princes now work in government service or in one of the coast towns or in one of the large cities of India. They return to the palace only for vacations and ceremonies. The lands of the major royal property-groups of Malabar are at present declared impartible by law, but there is dissatisfaction with this law among their younger members. Individual partition of property, in accordance with the new Nayar inheritance laws to be explained below, is expected to take place in most palaces within the next few years, and has already been applied for in some. The royal lineages are in fact now breaking down in precisely the same manner as are retainer Nayar taravads.

It is clear, however, that royal property-groups were traditionally able to comprise more segments and cohere for longer periods than could retainer groups. The differences in structure which made this possible were: 1) the landed estates which were large enough to

613 support many members and, together with the
644 political office, had a sentimental value for
423 them; 2) sthanams, which lifted the five oldest men out of the factionalism of their property-groups; 3) the spacious construction of palaces with privacy for each woman and her descendants, each adult man, and each visiting Nambudiri husband; 4) the very rigid rules of etiquette and avoidance which discouraged quarrels between men and incest between men and women; 5) the ability of the palace to employ separate servants for each adult; and 6) the peculiar residence-arrangements in royal and a few chiefly lineages, which, together with the universal practice of hypergamy, gave the property-group some of the features of a matriclan (14) and enabled it to live for generations on the same site. The existence of Nambudiri Brahmans as a leisure class of ritual specialists, many of whom were free to leave their own estates and live as drones (or "as breeding bulls", as one Calicut prince remarked) in the palaces, was crucial to this, as was the ability of the royal lineage, because of the concentration of wealth and political power in its hands, to maintain a horde of retainer lineages at its doorstep to provide mistresses for the princes and a bodyguard for the king.

613 In spite of these special devices, royal and
644 chiefly lineages did, even traditionally, divide into separate property-groups when their numbers became unwieldy. Unfortunately I lack genealogies to show whether, as in retainer lineages, this regularly occurred at a particular

613 644 point in their development. There is plenty of historical evidence, however, to show that they did so. In many cases, especially of the smaller Rajas and the chiefs, the kingdom or chiefdom was also divided between the segments at some point after their own private estates had been partioned.

613 644 631 [94] Reference to Map[1] helps to clarify this statement. Nads I and II (Kolattunad and Arikkal) were once united under the Kolattiri Rajas, but nad II early broke away as a small independent chiefdom ruled by a segment of the lineage which had been converted to Islam by the Arabs. Nad I, which remained the kingdom of Kolattiri, was subdivided into smaller nads ruled by Samantan naduvaris. There are today several lineages of these, but Innes reports that they have all split off from one of two original lineages. Nad II was similarly ruled by a high class Nayar chieftain lineage (14) which at various times was feudatory to Kolattiri. This lineage divided into several branches each of which took as portion of the nad and ruled it independently. Nad IV was also once ruled by a single naduvari lineage as one property-group (Mithangath Kovilagath Thottoli), as feudatory of Kolattiri. In 1766, the group partitioned its properties between its five segments, but retained the office of naduvari, and also a second athanam, for the first and second man of the whole lineage.

The Kurumbranad Rajas, (nad X), like the Kolattiri Rajas, are said to be one of the oldest ruling families of Kerala and to have received their nad from the last of the Perumals. The

[1] [See p. 105, category 116 --- Analyst]

613 The area ruled by the Kurumbranad Rajas is
644 thought to have once extended as far south as
631 nad XI, where it bordered on the Zamorin's
territory, and as far north as nads IV and VI. Nad IX was formerly ruled by the Rajas of Kollam, who are thought to have been an independent segment of the Kurumbranad family. The Kollam Rajas were conquered and expelled by the Zamorins.

The Kottayam Rajas, who ruled nads VII and XXX, and were in possession of nad XI for a short time before the British took over, are said by some informants to have once formed one lineage with the Kurumbranad Rajas, (with whom Innes too reports that they were "closely related".) This is likely, since the two lineages acknowledge each other to be Kshattriyas, but will not intermarry. Innes also reports that nad XXX (a mountainous, sparsely populated area) was conquered by Kottayam and Kurumbranad together and later divided between them. Before the British came, the Kottayam lineage redivided and one property-group, Parassi, became independent chieftains over part of nad VI. When the Muslims invaded from Mysore the main branch of the Kottayam family fled temporarily to Travancore and in their absence Parassi became rulers of nads VI and XXX. They later opposed the British settlement of Malabar and were therefore deposed and not given a pension. Parassi and Kottayam (who returned) are still independent lineages but do not yet intermarry. The Payyormala Nayar chieftains of nad VIII who ruled as feudatories

613 of Kurumbranad, were also once one lineage,
644 which divided its rule and its lands between
631 three segments. This nad, like nads X and XI was for a short time conquered by the Zamorin, and its rulers, along with the Kurumbranad Rajas, became his feudatories.

The Kadattunad Rajas of nad VII are not one of the oldest lineages of Kerala and are not a segment of one of the neighbouring lineages. Krishna Iyer reports (15) that [96] Kadattunad was once a branch of the Porlattiri royal lineage which once ruled nad XII. The Porlattiri lineage was the first to be dispossessed by the Zamorin and its members are said to have fled north and sought refuge with the Kolattiri lineage. Innes says that the Kadattunad lineage sprang from the union of a Kolattiri woman with a Porlattiri man, but our informants in North Malabar thought that Kadattunad are descended from a Kolattiri man who gave this nad to his Porlattiri wife and children, in accordance with a common North Malabar custom.

The Pulavayi Nayar chieftains of nad XIV were once independent rulers in their jungly nad, but became nominal feudatories of the Zamorin. Their lineage and rule were also divided into several branches. Nads XIII and XV were once united under the Parappu royal lineage, which divided its nad between two branches, both of which were early overrun by the Zamorin. The Beyport Rajas' lineage, which remained as a feudatory of the Zamorin and is still extant, is a branch of the Parappu lineage. Nads XXIII and XXIV were similarly once one with nad XXV

613 under the Palghat Rajas, but the Zamorin drove
644 a wedge into their territory in the 18th century
631 and took nad XXV. The other two nads were
divided between two branches of the Palghat lineage.

Nad XXVIII was formerly ruled by the Chavakkad Rajas, whose lineage became a feudatory of Cochin. The lineage divided into four tavaris, which quarreled with each other for political power. One of these branches, known as the Rajas of Punnattur, finally appealed to the Zamorin for [97] support against the other three, which were supported by Cochin. The Zamorin came to their help, overran the whole nad, and made its rulers feudatory to himself.

The Vellatiri Rajas, who ruled nad XIX and formerly nads XX and XXI as the kingdom of Walluvanad, remained a small lineage and, like the Zamorins, did not partition until the British began to rule. Their numbers then increased and they are now divided into four palaces.

Since the Zamorin's lineage, which maintained its kingdom intact, was one which happened not to increase in numbers or divided its property-group over four centuries, it might be thought tempting to argue that the cohesion of each kingdom traditionally depended on the cohesion of its royal lineage.

However, we must be clear in recognizing that the cohesion and expansion of the Zamorin's kingdom, and to a lesser extent of that of Cochin, and later of Travancore, depended on factors other than the structure of their royal lineages. Chief of these factors were, it seems likely,

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the expansion of overseas' trade with the Arabs and later, the Europeans, from the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries; the developments of better means of communication in the larger kingdoms of the plains, where this was not too difficult; some ammassing of wealth in the hands of rulers; and leading from this, their ability to organize larger armies which (especially after the adoption of gun-warfare) permitted them to conquer neighbouring weaker nads. The persistence of these larger units seems to have depended on the strength of their new political institutions, chiefly [98] the militia and the central courts of justice, as well as on a widening of the field of social relations of the "good" castes who controlled the administration.

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Along with this went a very slow process of social mobility in the upper reaches of the society. The caste system of rulers, chiefs, village headmen and retainers was not entirely stationary: retainer-lineages which had distinguished themselves in war were sometimes appointed as desavaris and gradually changed their ritual rank, and it was possible for a desavari lineage to increase in wealth and be made a naduvari lineage, or for a small naduvari lineage to increase in wealth (as did the Zamorins), expand its territory, and call itself a royal lineage, claiming the rank of Kshattriyas. This process took some time, indeed: it was not until the eighteenth century that the Zamorin's lineage, after going through a ceremony in which its members passed through the body of a golden cow, were able to claim that

613 they had been reborn as Kshattriyas, and to
644 shake off their marital ties with feudatory lin-
631 eages and marry their women only to Nambu-
565 diris. The same process went on in other parts of Kerala; it is even whispered by some in North Malabar that the Kadattunad lineage started out as a high class Nayar taravad with the title of Adiodi and, through outstanding military services and marriage alliances with Kolattiri, gradually established itself first as naduvaris and later as an independent royal lineage.

613 The size and cohesion of a kingdom thus de-
644 pended not on kinship factors but on political
631 and economic factors such [99] as trade, eco-
601 nomic specialization and the development of specialized political institutions. When their kingdoms and private estates became large, the kinship systems of the royal lineages adapted themselves to this change: they modified their residence-patterns, practised exclusively hypergamous marriage, and developed the institution of athanams. It is arguable that had their economy and political institutions developed still further before the British came, they would have been obliged to change their kinship system still more, for the unwieldy structure of matrilineal lineages, with segments periodically hiving off and claiming themselves independent, certainly made it difficult to establish a stable system of succession to the crown. The history
613 of the Cochin lineage, which had two athanams
644 and in the fifteenth century partitioned into five
631 property-groups, was from 1510 to 1792 one of perpetual dissension between the heads of

613 property-groups. These in turn scrambled for
644 the crown and in turn allied themselves with the
631 Zamorins, the Portuguese and the Travancore
Rajas to help them to establish their claims. Despite periodic total conquest by one or other neighbouring ruler, however, the kingdom was never divided between its segments as were many of the smaller chiefdoms, I think because, like Calicut and Walluvanad, it had developed trade and centralized political institutions which would not permit of its reversion to smaller units. Whether, had their kingdoms grown much larger the rulers would have been obliged to abandon the matrilineal system, is a question which cannot be answered out of the data available. [100]

At all events it is clear that despite its militia and relatively centralized administration, the whole political structure of the central area, as well as the kinship system of its rulers, depended for its persistence on a relatively stationary or only very gradually changing economy which would permit the perpetuation of hereditary political offices. For the administration, managed by the "good" upper castes, was built up round a network of kinship ties. Nambudiris fathered the Rajas and sporadically, the high caste population at large; the Rajas fathered the chieftains, and the chieftains the desavaris; while the whole retainer Nayar population, despite its division into karas, villages, and lineages linked in perpetual affinal kinship, was also united throughout the kingdom by the practice of sexual unions between the mobile

613 soldiers and Nayar women stationary in their
644 villages. It was left to the British, with their
631 introduction of a new highly specialized expanding economy with mechanized industry, to crack the system apart. This was essentially a small scale feudal system - (the Zamorin's kingdom, at the height of its power, cannot have had more than 500,000 inhabitants) - and it depended on the existence of a fairly stable economy with the village as the basic social unit, self-sufficient for food.[101]

NOTES

162 (1) In 1931 the matrilineal castes numbered
[611] roughly one-fifth of the total population.

(2) Muslims in 1931 numbered about 15% of the total population, being concentrated chiefly in the south of Malabar District. The first converstions to Islam were probably carried out in the ninth century by Arab traders who visited the coast. This community, called the Mappillas, increased greatly after the fourteenth century, but particularly during the Muslim invasions from Mysore in the 1760's. The Muslims of North Malabar District follow matrilineal descent with matrilocal residence; those of other areas follow patriliny. For a brief account of
[1113] North Malabar Muslim kinship see Gough, "Incest Prohibitions and Rules of Exogamy in three matrilineal groups of the Malabar Coast", in Int. Archives of Ethnography, June 1952.

The Christians of Kerala numbered about 2
of the population in 1931. The Syrian Christians

162 the most numerous and ancient group, claim
that their church was founded by St. Thomas.
The Portuguese converted some of them by
force to Roman Catholicism and also made many
converts from the lowest Hindu castes. Christians are concentrated chiefly in Cochin and
Travancore.

113 (3) For a fuller discussion of the meaning of
this ceremony see Gough, "Female Initiation
Rites on the Malabar Coast", forthcoming in
J.R.A.I.

(4) E. Colson and M. Gluckman, Seven Tribes
of British Central Africa (1951), p. 129. [102]

787 (5) Occasionally the astrologer may divine that
753 the spirit of a recent ancestress is causing
sickness to women or children. An emergency
propitiation of cooked food is then made to here
in the ancestor-shrine.

769 (6) In a new house there may be no stool at all,
778 unless the house was built some time before
the partition by a man who died before it became
occupied by the new property-group, and who
thus becomes its first karanavan-spirit. If
there are no stools the members of the group
go back to their parent-house for ancestral
propitiations for one or two generations.

212 (7) Nayar women like men could traditionally
read and write Malayalam, and keep accounts.

796 (8) Onam is a harvest-festival in September;
Vishu the New Year's Day, in March; and Tiruvadhira, a women's festival to Kama Devan, the
Hindu god of passion.

113 (9) Murdock, Social Structure, 1949, p. 10.

(10) From the Book of Duarte Barbosa, (Hakluyt

113 1921), p. 241.

(11) A.I. Richards, Some Types of Family Structure amongst the Central Bantu, in African Systems of Kinship and Marriage (Radcliffe-Brown and Forde, 1950).

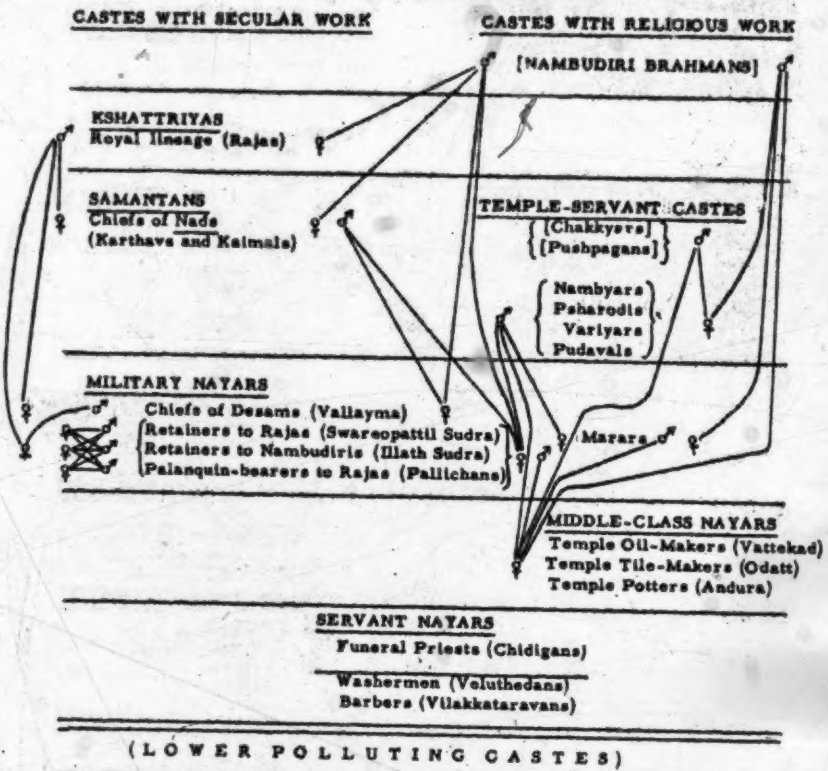
582 (12) Matrilateral cross cousin marriage is preferred to patrilateral, since it harmonizes the conjugal interests of a man and his sister's son, the most rivalrous relationship between men. It is also of course possible with hypergamous unions, whereas patrilateral cross cousins unions are not. In one Cochin village 7.2% of living Nayar women had married the father's own or classificatory maternal nephew; 1.6% had married the own or classificatory mother's brother's son. [103] Taking the women of six lineages over five generations, 13.9% of marriages were to the father's nephew, 9.0% to the uncle's son. In Walluvanad division, South Malabar, of the women of nine lineages over five generations, 11.2% had married the father's nephew, 4.7% the uncle's son (own or classificatory).

613 (13) In Murdock's sense of a matrilineal, matri-
573 local unit with the husbands of the women as permanent residents. However, in a true matriclan adult male members of the matrilineage or matrisib would be living away with their wives whereas in the royal lineages princes lived at home and merely visited their wives nearby. In most naduvari and all lower subcaste lineages, women were visited only occasionally by their Nambudiri lovers who lived in their own households.

613(14) Called Randatara Acchanmar, (lit. "Fathers over the two taras".) The nad was composed of two taras, and the chieftain taravad had the title of acchan, common in North Malabar.

(15) The Zamorins of Calicut, p.1.

CHART I RITUAL RANKING AND HYPERGAMOUS UNIONS BETWEEN THE HIGHER CASTES OF COCHIN


CASTES WITH SECULAR WORK
CASTES WITH RELIGIOUS WORK
[NAMBUDIRI BRAHMANS]
KSHATTRIYAS
Royal lineage (Rajas)
SAMANTANS
Chiefs of Nads
(Karthavs and Kaimals)
TEMPLE-SERVANT CASTES
[Chakkyars]
[Pushpagans]
Nambyars
Psharodis
Variyars
Pudavals
MILITARY NAYARS
Chiefs of Desams (Valiayma)
Retainers to Rajas (Swareopattil Sudra)
Retainers to Nambudiris (Illath Sudra)
Palanquin-bearers to Rajas (Pallichans)
Marars
MIDDLE-CLASS NAYARS
Temple Oil-Makers (Vattekad)
Temple Tile-Makers (Odatt)
Temple Potters (Andura)
SERVANT NAYARS
Funeral Priests (Chidigans)
Washermen (Veluthedans)
Barbers (Vilakkataravans)
(LOWER POLLUTING CASTES)

Key

} indicates equivalence of, or dispute for, rank.

A line drawn across the page indicates that all castes above it rank unequivocally above all castes below it.

Oblique lines and curves indicate some amount of hypergamous mating between the castes.

♂-male ♀-female

Castes shown in brackets have patrilineal descent: all others have matrilineal descent.

1: Gough-105 E-4, 5 (no date) 1954 AWII Kerala AWII

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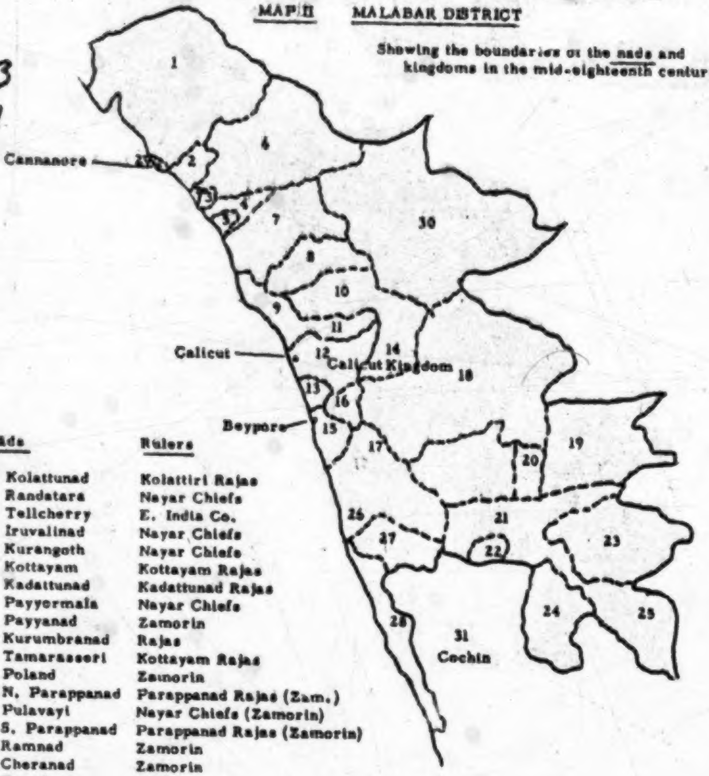
MAP II MALABAR DISTRICT

Showing the boundaries of the nads and kingdoms in the mid-eighteenth century.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Cannanore
Calicut
Calicut Kingdom
Beypore
Cochin

Nads	Rulers
1 Kolattunad	Kolattiri Rajas
2 Randatara	Nayar Chiefs
3 Tellicherry	E. India Co.
4 Iruvalinad	Nayar Chiefs
5 Kurangoth	Nayar Chiefs
6 Kottayam	Kottayam Rajas
7 Kadattunad	Kadattunad Rajas
8 Payyormala	Nayar Chiefs
9 Payyanad	Zamorin
10 Kurumbranad	Rajas
11 Tamarasseri	Kottayam Rajas
12 Poland	Zamorin
13 N. Parappanad	Parappanad Rajas (Zam.)
14 Pulavayi	Nayar Chiefs (Zamorin)
15 S. Parappanad	Parappanad Rajas (Zamorin)
16 Ramnad	Zamorin
17 Cheranad	Zamorin
18 Ernad	Zamorin
19 Walluvanad	Walluvanad Rajas
20 Walluvanad	Zamorin
21 Nedunganad	Zamorin
22 Kavalappara	Nayar Chiefs
23 Vadamalappuram	Palghat Rajas
24 Temmalapuram	Palghat Rajas
25 Naduvattam	Zamorin
26 Bettatnad	Bettem Rajas (Zamorin)

Nads	Rulers
27 Kutnad	Zamorin
28 Chavakkad	Chavakkad Rajas (Zamorin)
29 Arikkal	Arikkal Rajas
30 Wynaad	Kottayam Rajas
31 Cochin	Cochin Rajas

[For information on the political history of the Malabar coast, as well as on the traditional political and economic system, see category 116.]

1: Gough   AW11 Kerala AW11
601

[This entire source presents a historical and functional interpretation of Nayar kinship structure, and the reader is referred to category 116. Only sections dealing specifically with kinship nomenclature have been marked for category 601.]